


# Slavery In India

Amal Kumar Chatterjee, M.A.





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# SLAVERY IN INDIA





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Member of the Asiatic Society of Bengal.

*With a foreword by*

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This book is dedicated to  
my beloved mother Kamala Devi  
Whose memory is a fountain of eternal  
inspiration to me and who passed away  
on the 3rd April, 1959  
while this book was under  
preparation.

## FOREWORD

Slavery is now technically illegal everywhere in the civilized world. But we cannot claim that we have yet seen the end of all types of slavery. It is a very old institution and it seems to have been more or less universal as well. Many a society found it convenient to have in service slaves—"living tools" as Aristotle had called them—"tools" which could move, talk, understand and work with some amount of intelligence. Very late in history it struck the conscience of some that there is something inherently wrong and degrading in slavery. The story of the brave, arduous and protracted fight against slavery and slave trade is well-known.

Sri Amal Kumar Chattopadhyay has compiled an account of slavery in India. We find that slavery in some form or other was known in India in almost every age much though we have liked to believe that Megasthenes was right when he said that there were no slaves in India. It is some comfort to find that some Smritis at least enjoined that an "Arya" could not be made a slave. It does not seem, however, that slavery was an important institution in India in any particular period. Indians never depended on slavery in the way the Greeks, the Romans or the Southern states of the U.S.A. did. Nonetheless, aspects of slavery in India in different areas and in different ages, require to be studied in greater detail. For instance, very few people suspect that slavery was

prevalent in British India, but Sri Chattopadhyay claims that he has found a number of documents in the High Court and the Writers' Buildings, right here in Calcutta, which would prove that slavery had some importance in Calcutta and Bengal, before its abolition in 1833. I hope some day he will have time to publish a research paper on slavery during Company's rule.

There are a number of points where I disagree with Sri Chattopadhyay and I would welcome a chance to be shown that I am wrong. Have we not been told that a teacher's aim should be victory over all opponents, but defeat in the hands of his own disciples? It is with some amount of pride that I record that Sri Chattopadhyay is a student of ours in the Post-Graduate class. He is now 22. I admire his devotion, industry and enthusiasm and I am sure that those who will read this book will also agree that the author deserves congratulations for these virtues.

*Asim Kumar Datta.*

Calcutta,  
16.11.59

Dean of the College of Arts,  
Jadvpur University, Calcutta.





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### CORRIGENDA :

Foreword :

Line No. 17. Read would have liked, for would like,

Preface :

Page I Line 25 Read Pharoah for Pharaoh,

„ 3, Line 15, Read thorough for through

„ 12, Line 1, Read and for dna,

„ „ Line 7, Read Was for saw.

„ „ Line 16, Read Montescueue for Montiscueve

Chapter I

Page 8, Line, Read Blondes for blonds.

Chapter IV

Page 61 Line 16, Read Karamandal for Karasamandal,

Chapter VI ( Heading : )

Read West-Indies and other S. E. countries. for South Eastend Asian Countries.

Chapter VII ( Heading )

Line 3, Read, Vain is his labour, for vain are his efforts.

Chapter VIII

Page 121, Line 6, Read bondsmen, for bondmen.

## PREFACE

“Speech is silver ; but silence is gold”. I wish I should remain silent and let my work speak for itself. But a word of explanation is perhaps necessary for the publication of this monograph, because its subject-matter is of an unusual nature. A question may naturally arise as to what led me to dwell upon a subject like this when one can work on many other aspects of Indian history.

On the 23rd December, 1958, I had an occasion to see Ceciel B. De Mille's immortal motion picture—‘The Ten Commandments’ at the Light House Theatre, Calcutta, at the behest of some of my friends. Unlike other pictures ‘The Ten Commandments’ had an unusual beginning with an introductory address by the producer, the late Mr. Cecil B De Milles. In his address Cecial B. De Milles observsd that the question whether man is the property of God or state and whether he has a separate existence of his own apart from the state, is a question of vital importance. The question is as old as the human civilization itself and received fullest treatment through the ages in the hands of sages and great scholars. But still this question remains to be solved. The picture deeply moved me. This unforgettable picture which reflected the gorgeous and luxurious life of the Great Pharaoh Sethi and his courtiers, the inhuman order of the Pharaoh to butcher all the newly born children of the Hebrew slaves, the strange escape of Moses, the enslavement of the whole Hebrew nation under the regime of the Pharaoh, the inhuman and merciless torture and exploitation by the

Pharao of the Hebrews to construct them big monuments, mausoleums and obelisks and pyramids. the heroism of Moses—who inspite of being a slave was reared up as a prince by the Pharao's sister , the snow white, pure and sublime love of Nefretteri—the Pharao's daugher towards Moses, the jealousy and conspiracy of Ramessis, the crown prince and his success in the plot, the sufferings, banishment, escape and arrival of of Moses as the liberator of the Hebrews from the Pharao Ramessis's bondage—is largely based on historical facts, and it created an indelible impression upon my mind. I was overwhemed with the poignant beauty, glamour, heroism, cruelty and evil of the Egyptian court life and the heroism, truthfulness, suffering and final success of Moses—the liberator of the millions of oppressed souls. It was at that time that the idea of writing something about slavery came for the first time to my mind.

After a few weeks I had another opportunity to see a picture of a similar nature. It was M.G.M's masterpiece 'Quo Vadis'—a Nobel Laureate's immortal creation on ancient Roman life was revealed in this picture. The splendour and grandeur of ancient Roman empire, its mighty but capricious emperor Nero—a man of many good qualities, but at the same time an unmitigated villain who derived a feindish pleasure in setting Rome to fire and in fiddling while Rome was burning gave me much interest. I was deeply moved to see the pathetic conditions of slaves who, for embracing Christianity, were being thrown before the hungry lions.



I was determined to write something about slavery after coming out of the cinema house. Thus, cinema became the inspiration of my research work.

It was a strange coincidence that at this time I was assigned a tutorial work upon slavery in India in the Gupta period (circa. A.D. 300—550) by my learned and respected teacher Dr. Sachindra Kumar Maity, M.A., Ph. D., (London), Lecturer in History, Jadavpur University. I had, therefore, an opportunity to go widely through the different aspects of slavery in this connection. I had to study widely the authoritative books and sources to delve deep into the subject. My tutorial work was appreciated by Dr. Maity and he greatly encouraged me. So, I thought of writing a through and exhaustive history of slavery in India right from the ancient period down to the modern times, as far as it can be constructed from the available sources.

Accordingly I started the work and deeply engaged myself in the study of the history of Muslim rule in India. I am greatly indebted to my teacher Dr. S. K. Maity, who encouraged me and gave me a list of important books which helped me considerably to carry on my work on Muslim as well as the Portuguese period. He also advised me to go to the Asiatic Society Library at No. 1, Park Street, Calcutta. Here I must express my deep sense of gratitude to Dr. Maity and say that this humble work would not have been possible without his encouragement, aid and advice.

Slavery, it is generally agreed, originated from the earliest laws of wars. The captive was the Victor's slave. Such was the law of war. The institution is of

incalculable antiquity and it is next to impossible to assign any particular date as to its origin.

With the advance of time the forms and varieties of slavery greatly increased. The slaves were exploited in various ways in different countries of antiquity. In primitive society we see the human beings are subject to gross exploitation. The owners control the lives of their slaves, often sanction their use in ritual sacrifices and frequently subject them to compulsory labour. Such a slavery has been a characteristic aspect in all the primitive societies. The wives and daughters of one captured or slain in the battle were also reduced to slavery. They were exploited as prostitutes or concubines and maid-servants. In ancient Greece, Rome, Japan, India and many other countries, the practice of maintaining Vestal Virgins or Devadashis or Gaisha girls evolved and was encouraged. It has been a general feature of social organisation in all the countries of antiquity. With the crystallization of social institution the modes of slavery also changed. But far from being relaxed, its form became more and more rigid and the slaves' fate became more and more worse and horrible with the growth and development of human civilization. In ancient Greece, Rome, Egypt and Near Eastern countries, it assumed immense proportions. The same thing also happened in Malayan Archipelago, South East Asian countries, Japan and China. In India, the institution dates back to the ancient Vedic period, the Aryan masters calling the defeated natives of the soil as Dasas, and reduced them to slavery. In 2nd cent. B.C., Rome

became the great centre of slave traders. The barbarian and Delian slaves appear to have been used as labourers in the household, agricultural establishments and in the different bronze and copper mines. Sometimes, the slave gangs on large scale were used in ranching. Everyday 20,000 slaves changed hands in the Delian slave markets.

The slaves were most brutally and barbarously treated almost in every country of antiquity. The life of a most able-bodied man serving in such a mine ended within three to four years. They were subjected to undescribable tortures. In Sumer and Babylon, the husband could reduce his wife to slavery or sell her as a slave for unchastity or extravagance. The slaves were treated as legal objects, not as human beings, and therefore, they could be bought, sold, transferred, given away, mortgaged, exchanged and lent out or utilised in all other ways.

To ancient and mediaeval mind, slavery was a fixed and accepted element of life, and no moral problem was involved. It existed as a constant factor in the social and economic life of all countries of antiquity. And this came down to continue in the mediaeval age as well. Its validity as a system of labour was never seriously questioned either in ancient or mediaeval ages. No attempt to abolish it was ever made by any ancient or mediaeval Government or monarchy. Greek political philosophers discussed the institution of slavery, but as to whether it was a condition grounded on natural law or made by men, they said nothing. The great political philosophers like Polybius and



Aristotle, far from uttering a single word in favour of doing away with this institution, strongly favoured its retention. Cicero, the noted Senator, historian and philosopher poet can be charged with great cruelty as a slave master. He was an immensely rich man and had a large estate. He owned a large number of slaves like many other noblemen. Cicero was an accomplished poet and a man of very fine literary taste. In dignity of passion, in courage of conviction and in philosophical acumen, his poems reach the high water-mark of perfection. But curiously enough, Cicero was a tyrant and a capricious slave master. He derived a feindlish pleasure in torturing his slaves. It is said, he invented new measures everyday to torture his slaves and enjoyed a heinous pleasure in doing so.

In mediaeval time, it existed in almost every country of the world. And this evil institution did not draw any protest from anybody. Even the Christian Church did not challenge its believers to own slaves. Thus, slavery was accepted as a part of the general labour system of the world in the mediaeval age as in the antiquity.

Slavery began to disappear from the mediaeval Europe as serfdom increased. With the growth of feudalism the landlords were urged to retain serfs who were attached to their lands. And it was the serf, not the slave, who earned the bread of the mediaeval Europe.

In ancient India slavery existed as an important social institution, but in a milder form. The condition of Indian slaves was not worse than that of domestic

servants. The Greek traveller Megasthenes observed in his account that this institution was perhaps unknown to this country. The highly enlightened condition of Indian slaves perhaps led him to think so. But his views should not be looked down upon. There is a general tendency among the research scholars in recent years, especially among European scholars, to lay blame equally on the ancient Indian society for owning slaves. But they forget one thing—that is, slavery existed in all the countries of antiquity as a full-fledged institution, and the social and economic structures of these countries were interlinked with slavery. A Roman noble or a Greek aristocrat could not do without the help of the slaves, who, apart from serving in their estates, agricultural fields and mines, also served and performed almost all the household works. The beautiful women slaves, in their young age, could not but satisfy the ugly desires of the masters; and when they became unable to do so in their middle ages, they had to serve as the maid-servants and attendants to their wives. The whole labour system of the European and Near Eastern countries was constituted by the slaves. All the hard, tiresome and unremunerative jobs were forcibly carried out by them. Construction of roads, bridges, houses, castles and all other difficult enterprises were obviously accomplished by the slaves. In Egypt, it was the slaves who built up the great pyramids shedding their blood. The same also happened in China where the famous and long Chinese wall was built up with the help of the slaves. Neither a social reformer and a philosopher nor any

religious body ever uttered a single word against it. But in India, the institution was practically of no importance. There was, of course, slavery as an institution and human beings were dealt in, yet, the condition of the Indian Dashed were much better than their European and Near Eastern counterparts. The great philanthropists like Gautama the Buddha, Maharshi Asoka and others, always insisted the people on according kind and good treatment to the Dashed. The Smritikaras like Yajnavalkya, Katyayana, Brihaspati and .Manu strictly forbade the slave masters to inflict corporal punishment on the slaves. The lives of the slaves in ancient India was never at stake. For very gross mistakes and misbehaviour they could be jostled and that was all. But in ancient Greece and Rome the condition of the slaves was quite horrible. For trifling mistakes, e.g., for stealing petty things, breaking the utensils or negligence of duties, the slaves were most inhumanly tortured. Their skin was drawn up with lashes and blood tinged the hands of the masters. Their lives were less valuable than pieces of stones. It was a fun and merry-making business with the Romans to throw the Christian slaves before the hungry lions or other beasts of prey. Thousands of Roman men and women spectators used to witness the fearful sights from the stadium of Rome, and they were, it is said, besides with joy, as the bodies of the slaves were torn up into pieces by the hungry lions. But this thing was quite unthinkable in ancient India.

The fertile plains and fabulous wealth of India have attracted the attention of foreign invaders from time



immemorial. The Muslims invaded India first in 712 A.D. But the systematic conquest began with the attacks of Muhammad of Ghor in the tenth century A.D.

The Muslims were men of different nationalities with different culture and religious outlook. They brought the system of slavery with them in a new form. They encouraged the enslavement of enemies and kafers. Thousands of Hindus and Buddhists fell under the collar of slavery during the Muslim rule. The wives and daughters of the vanquished Hindus naturally became reduced to slavery. They were entirely used for the sexual pleasure of their masters and they had to bear their children to increase the number of Mussalmans in India.

The Muslims are sexually an indiscriminate race. So, the worst victims, throughout the entire period of Muslim history in India, were obviously the women slaves. Every Muslim noble had in his harem, many women—both Begums and Bandis. And they were zealously protected from the contact of any outsider. They never believed in any man's moral character, nor did they believe in the chastity of their women in the harem. Every Muslim suspected his wives' moral character and kept heavy guard on them. To protect them safely, they engaged a large number of Habshi Khojas as the guards of the harem. This hateful practice was quite a common stock in trade with the Muslims. The Khojas were impotent, and hence, they were considered not at all harmful. But despite all these things, the Muhammedans treated their slaves



quite generously. And in most cases, they made no difference between the slaves and their own children.

Slavery assumed immense proportions in the Portuguese territories in India. The Portuguese people hailed from Portugal—a small country to the west of Spain. They were men of dauntless spirits and excellent navigators. But piracy was their main occupation and they derived as much profit from piracy as from legitimate trade and commerce. The Portuguese people were greatly encouraged by Pope Nicholas V, who in a decree in 1560 empowered them to sell the Moslems and other enemies of Christianity as slaves. In India, they began trading with slavery right from the 16th century which continued for good many years. They forcibly kidnapped men and women from the adjacent lands and sold them out both inside and outside India on a huge profit. Their treatment to the slaves was awfully murderous and unthinkable. But God never endures such cruelty for a long time. So, they were thoroughly extirpated from the country during the reign of Emperor Shah Jahan. The three Portuguese pockets of Goa, Diu and Daman still bear testimony to their arrogant rule in India.

The European people began to come to India during the rule of Emperor Jahangir. Sir Thomas Rowe was sent to his court by King James I. And he managed to obtain his permission to trade in India and install a settlement in Surat. In 1600, the East India Company was instituted and two years later a monopolistic charter was obtained from Queen Elizabeth I to trade in India. Likewise, the French and the Dutch

came. They took the fullest advantage of the political disintegration of India. They began to set up their colonies and became stronger enough to hold their sway politically over the princes of India. By the end of the 17th century the British had gained a number of footholds in India and established some bridge-heads on the Indian coastline. They became the paramount power of the country after the battle of Plassey in 1757.

During the British administration of India slavery was reinstituted by Warren Hastings, although it was established as a full-fledged institution by Capt. Hawkins about a century ago, in 1662, in the British colonies of America.

In India, slavery was never a problem before it assumed immense notoriety in the days of the East India Company's rule. The English and the French alike had not the least care for the cruelty in the traffic of human flesh and blood. The poor Indians who were enslaved for various reasons, were either exported to different countries, far and near as agricultural slaves or employed as slaves in the establishments of European settlers. They were either confined to domestic servitude and they performed all sorts of hard and menial works there or engaged in mills, mines and plantations of their European masters. They were mercilessly exploited and barbarously treated. No importance was attached to their lives. The European slave masters can be specially condemned for the mingling of Indian slave women's blood with their own. They did not feel ashamed to live with their slave women as man

dna wife. Thereby they led to the creation of a large class of degenerate half-castes, who are now known as Anglo Indians.

Slavery was a part and parcel of human society from the early dawn of civilization. No one found anything wrong in it. It was only late in the 17th century that great political thinkers began to feel that there saw something degrading in the heart of the system. And Bodin (1596), the celebrated French political thinker and writer, was the first man ever to denounce the institution. He not only declared it illegal, immoral, decadent and degenerating, but sharply criticised and refuted the theory and arguments of Aristotle who pleaded for the retention of the institution due to its universal acceptance. The other writers who vehemently attacked the system were Rousseau and Montesquieu the preachers of the theory of liberty, equality and fraternity. The French revolutionary thinkers vehemently objected to the inequality of men for their difference in castes, creeds and colours. The greatest single factor that helped the abolition of the system was obviously the French Revolution of 1789. The Quakers also did not lag behind. They were great philanthropists who staunchly championed the cause of the depressed human souls. Lord Broughhan and Wilberforce carried on a large propaganda against the system. Shelley, the great revolutionary poet, was a great champion of the cause of the liberty of mankind. He detested slavery of both body and mind from the very core of his heart. His revolutionary ideas have been expressed in some of his elegant poems.



Slavery was abolished from England in the year 1807 due to the ceaseless efforts and movements of the Quakers. They also succeeded in wiping out the institution completely from the whole of the British Empire by an Act of Parliament in 1833.

The Act of 1833 which abolished slavery from the British Empire was an important landmark in the history of human civilization, as it persuaded the other nations to do away with the system one after another.

Due to the ceaseless efforts, endeavours and monumental works of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of U. S. A and the staunch champion of human rights, slavery was abolished from the U.S.A. in 1865. But Lincoln had to achieve this success at the the cost of his life. Lincoln was inspired by the ideas of the French Revolution as well as the famous work of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe—"Uncle Tom's Cabin"—which did more than anything else to create a strong public opinion in favour of doing away with slavery.

Abolition of slavery from Europe as well as from American states became possible late in the 19th century. People now began to understand that the days of tyranny and exploitation were over.

But in India slavery still continued to exist in the guise of labour slaves or coolies, who were recruited from the various parts of India and engaged as labourers in the indigo, tea and coffee plantations and gardens. Their condition was exactly like the slaves. Large numbers of such Indian coolies were exported to South Africa and the West Indies and Malaya Peninsula where their descendants are still living. They are now a great

problem both with the local governments as well as with the Government of India, due to the whimsical activities of the British Government late in the 19th century.

Slavery is now technically illegal everywhere in the world save perhaps from Saudi Arabia and some African countries, where the trade is being still carried on completely ignoring the charter of the U. N. O. But we cannot claim that the oppression on mankind has been totally wiped out. Man is still being grossly exploited in some form or other in many places even today due to the inherent wickedness of human character.

In this monograph, I have tried to portray a thorough and exhaustive study of slavery in India right from the primitive days down to the modern times in my humble way. My materials were scanty, scattered and fragmentary. I had to take, therefore infinite pains to prepare this thesis, which is, I believe, the first of its kind. I have thrown fresh lights on many aspects of slavery in the different periods of Indian history, specially in the British period. I have unfolded many a sealed page of Indian history. I have, moreover, tried to give a complete picture of slavery in the United States of America, just to draw out a contrast between the Indian slaves and their American counterparts within the purview of this work. A description of the heroic struggle and sacrifice of Lincoln is, moreover, necessary while reading anything about slavery. I think, I have revealed a complete picture of slavery in India with all its aspects within a small compass, and I have thrown a good deal of light upon many an obscure corner of Indian history.

The 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th and 7th chapters have been published in the monthly instalments in "Nagarjun" edited by Mr. L. K. Pandeya, in the February to September, 1959 issues, under the caption "Slavery in India and its bearing on Ayurveda" while the third chapter appeared in "Arani"—the magazine of the College of Arts, Jadavpur University, entitled "Slavery in Portuguese India". In the present volume, all these articles are compiled together with slight addition and alteration.

It will be noted that there are no footnotes to the work and that no authorities are cited except in the text. I have omitted them purposely as I wish the general reader to be able to read the book continuously, without his attention being distracted by interruptions which such references require. At the end of the book, however, I have given an adequate selected bibliography which, it is hoped, will satisfy any reader who wishes to dive more deeply into the subject.

I have received much encouragement, aid and advice from my teachers and friends alike. But the greatest encouragement I have always received is from my beloved teacher, Sri Ashim Kumar Datta, M.A. (Cal.) M.A. (Oxon.), Barrister-at law, Principal of the College of Arts, Jadavpur University, Calcutta, who has read my articles regularly with much interest and greatly encouraged me when they were published in Nagarjun. He is overburdened with his official duties ; still it is so kind of him to write a foreword for my book. He has taken this trouble out of his love and affection for his humble pupil. I do not know how to reciprocate



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I am thankful to my old class mate and beloved friend Mr. Kalyan Sen, M.A., and my friends Mr. Pabitra Bhaskar Sinha, M.A., Mr. Deba Prasad Chowdhuri M.A., Srimati Uma Basu, B.A., Sri P. K. Varman B.A., and Sri Gouri Sankar Chatterjee, B.A., for their kind encouragements. My sincerest thanks are due to Shree Abinash Chandra Choudhury, M A. for his kindly editing and correcting the entire proof sheets of my book.

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And in the last, but not in the least, I must express my profound gratitude and sense of indebtedness to Sri Sunil kumar Das, an employee of my father's office, who has helped me in so many ways. He has thoroughly prepared the typed written manuscripts and helped me in proof-reading and indexing. The preparation of the book could not have been possible without his great service and encouragements. I must thank him very much for these help and assistance. My thanks are also due to Mr. Jyotirmay Dutt & Sri Nilmani Rakshit for typing a portion of the manuscript copies of my book.

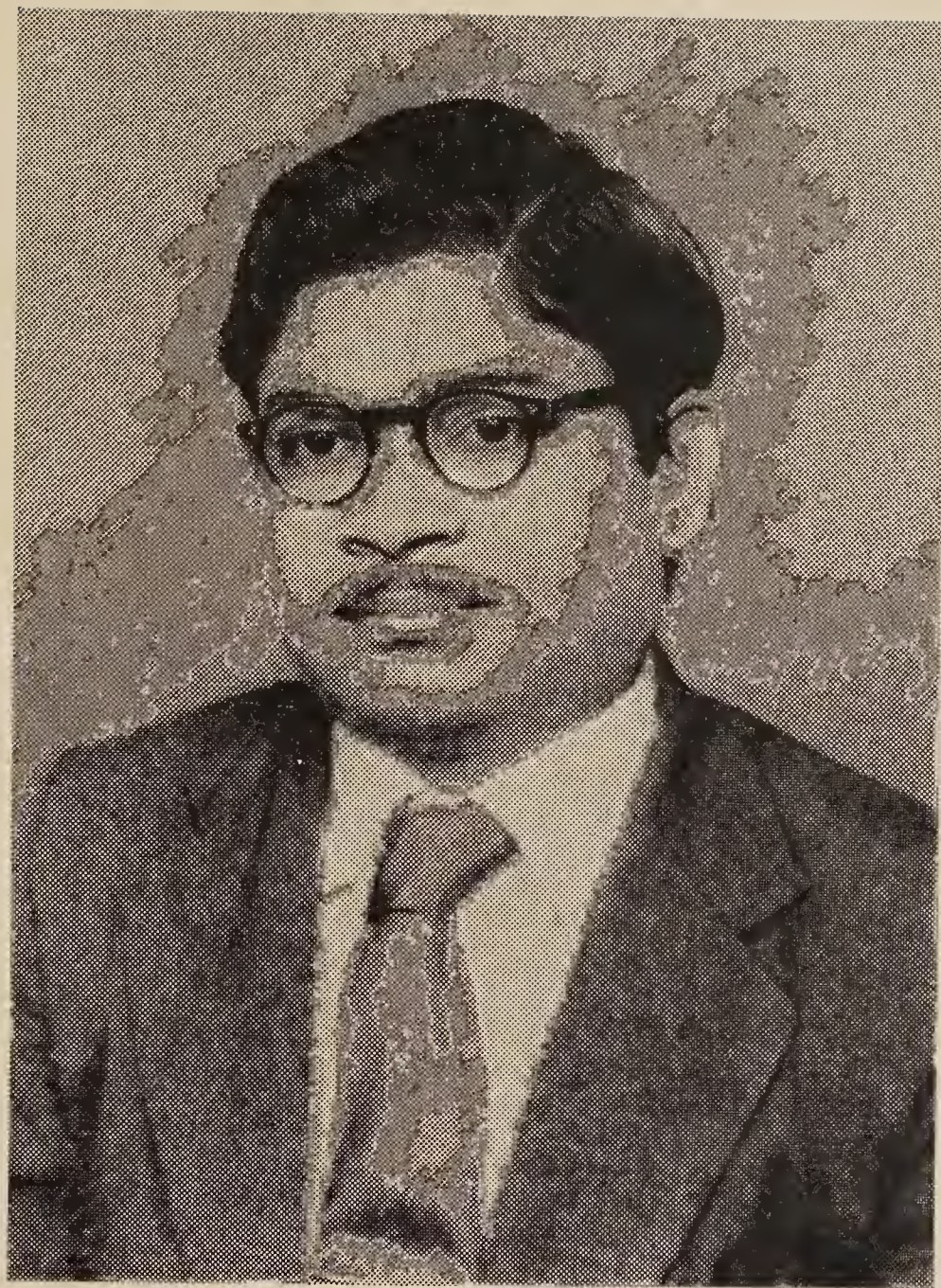
My beloved mother was lying seriously ill when I was engaged in writing this book during the months of February and March, 1959. She encouraged me every day inspite of her illness and when I expressed my humble desire to dedicate to her this first work of mine, she became very happy and heartily approved of my desire even from her death bed. She peacefully passed away on the 3rd day of April, 1959, quite prematurely, while the book was still under preparation. The book has had her blessings. It is, therefore, respectfully dedicated to her cherished memory which is my dearest possible treasure during the remainder of my life on this earth.

The 12th December, 1959.

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# SLAVERY IN INDIA

## CHAPTER I

Perhaps man is the most cruel of all animals in the world, because he has devised different measures, from the early dawn of civilization to fulfil his eternal lust for supremacy over the world including all the creatures. Man did not only exploit nature and its abundant resources for his own interest, but also exploited other creatures. The idea which has exerted single greatest influence upon man in all times and for all ages is the policy that might is the best right. And man has always followed this principle very sincerely, and did never hesitate to introduce slave system as an important institution in the social and economic life in ancient times. Man has tortured man in various ways from the early dawn of civilization, and the vilest one of all in all times and for all ages was obviously the introduction of slavery and its gradual development as an important social and economic institution in all countries of the world.

It is generally agreed that usually the origin of slavery was connected with warlike operations by a tribe and with the subjection of a conquered tribe. The institution is of incalculable antiquity and appears in the code of Hamurabi. It was already established in the Sumerian culture of the Babylonian area in the 4th millennium B. C. as a recognised institution. In Egypt under the Pharaohs, the system certainly existed from the earliest dynastic period, the number of slaves probably increasing during the period of empire (circa 1600—1000 B.C.). It existed as a constant factor in the social and economic life of the Near East and Europe. So, also, from the earliest times, slavery existed in India.

In India, as elsewhere, slavery originated from the earliest laws of the wars. The vanquished is the victor's slave—such is the law of war. With the advance of time and crystallisation of social institution, slavery became more and more institutionalised, and its forms and varieties increased. The Arthashastra classifies the five kinds of slaves as :—(1) Dhvajahrita (captured in battle), (2) Atmavikroyin (who sells himself), (3) Udaradasha or Garvadasha (one who is born to a Dashi from slave), (4) Ahitaka (one enslaved for a debt or pledged), (5) Danda Pranita (one enslaved for a fine or court's decree).

But Manu speaks of seven kinds of slaves, viz ; (1) captured in battle, (2) one who becomes so for food (i.e. in scarcity or in a famine), (3) one born in the house (ie, of a female slave), (4) one bought, (5) one given,



(6) one inherited (as a part of patrimony), (7) one who becomes so for paying off a fine or judicial decree. As time went on its form and nature varied greatly, Narada among all the Smritikaras contains the most elaborate treatment of slavery. He mentions fifteen kinds of slavery.

In ancient India, as elsewhere, the captives (dvajahrita) of war were the slaves of the captor ; and they were probably released from bondage after paying due ransom. Those slaves who survived their master, did not recover their freedom but were handed down to the legitimate heir along with other properties of the master.

The child born of a female slave in the house of a master, became a slave to the same master. He was described as Grihaja or Udaradasha in Narada and Manu. As in ancient Greece and Rome, slaves could be purchased in Indian slave markets (krita) for money. Narada also recognises slavery by gift. There are very few references to this kind of slave in our literature and law books, but in the Muslim and British period the king and Indian princes used to give female slaves as a part of their daughters' dowries.

Narada holds that the rightful owner of the slaves could pledge or mortgage their possession., and this state of mortgage continued till the debt was cleared.

According to Narada a man leaving a religious order is sentenced to slavery by the king, and such an apostate is never to be emancipated. This system was also in vogue in ancient Rome, where the Christians

were sentenced to slavery and sometimes thrown before the hungry lions or other beasts of prey. In India, of course, this threat was obviously an attempt to hold men to their proper order.

Narada also describes some other kinds of slaves. According to him, a debtor, or one who accepted slavery for his maintenance, was at once released from slavery on payment of the debt with interest and giving up the claim to subsistence, here Narada suggests three other modes of slavery: (1) One enslaved on account of his connection with a female slave, who becomes a slave of the owner of the female slave, (2) One enslaved for a stipulated period, and (3) "won through wager" is another specimen which reminds us of Draupadi in the notorious dice contest in the Mahabharata.

In *Mrichchakatika* we get references of self-sold slaves. In that drama Sudraka—a defeated gambler wished to sell himself for ten Suvarna, in order to escape the persecution of his creditor.

The Smriti laws of the later Hindu period develop the rules about slavery in the preceding period in some respects. Katyana while repeating the laws of Yajnavalkya and Narada forbidding enslavement in the ascending order of castes, categorically declares that a Brahmana can never be a slave, and further that the sale and purchase of a Brahmana woman are to be annulled. With the same Brahmanical bias he declares, in modification of the older laws, that while a Kshatriya and a Vaisya apostate from asceticism

is to be made a slave, a Brahmana offender is simply to suffer banishment. Introducing a new clause, Katyayana says that a free woman marrying a slave herself becomes a slave, but a female slave bearing a child to her master is immediately released from servitude. Usually the slaves were inherited by the heirs of their rightful master. After the death of a father who had many slaves, his sons inherited them along with other movable and immovable properties. If there is a partition, the sons divided the slaves equally. But a single male or female slave would be successively set to work at the house of each in turn, the period of a slave's stay at any one house being fixed according to its owner's shares of the inheritance.

The work which the slaves had to do was naturally extremely manifold and differed with the social position of the master and the intelligence of the slave. In the earlier period of Indian history the slaves performed work of economic importance, such as agriculture. They also served as domestic servants or personal attendants.

To take care of the master's household, to attend to his body, to prepare his food and serve the dinner, these were the commonest functions of a domestic slave. Narada enumerated the domestic work under two heads, pure and impure. The former was generally done by hired and other kinds of labour ; the latter was done exclusively by slaves. Sweeping the gateway, the privy, the road, and the place for rubbish, shampooing the secret parts of the body, gathering and put-



ing away the leavings of food, ordure and urine, rubbing the master's limbs when desired, were impure works and were performed exclusively by slaves. The slaves also served as the bathing attendants ( *Arthasstra* III—13 ; *Jataka* 1.383 ). Moreover, the washing of the feet of her master after his return from outside was one of the duties of a female slave.

Apart from personal attendants, a very common function of a female slave was pounding and winnowing of rice and spreading out the rice in the sun. The slaves were also seen cleaning the leavings of food ( *Narada* verse 6 ), fetching water and going on errands. Generally the female slaves were maintained for domestic work. And for outward work men were employed. The king's slaves served in the industrial and agricultural establishments.

The most evil feature of slavery was the use of female slaves as prostitutes or concubines. Very often the female slaves were kept for sexual enjoyment ; sometimes they were lent out for this purpose to others, their offsprings generally being accepted as interest. This was quite common in ancient Greece and Rome. In India a man could not forcibly enjoy a female slave without the authorization of the owner, if he enjoyed her without such sanction, he had to pay mere two panas as fine for a day. In most cases, however, these slave women or maid-servants appeared to have been used to serve in their master's house alone, and sometimes they had sons and daughters ( i e, who were *Grihaja* or homeborn. ) of their master or others.

Their children were considered very low in the social scale, for the child of a maid-servant was used as a vulgar term of abuse.

In the primitive concepts of social ethics this was the natural destiny for the wives and daughters of one slain in battle or made captive in war. Instances of slave women bearing child to their masters come from the later Vedic literature down to the Arthasastra and the Jatakas. The king's female slaves were to serve as bath-room attendants, shampooers, bedding room servants, washer women and flower garland-makers ( Arthasastra I ). Prostitutes and female slaves incapable of providing enjoyment to the king were to be employed in stores or kitchens. Female slaves were trained along with royal prostitutes in the arts of entertainment and feminine wiles. In the public taverns it was not an extraordinary spectacle to find a dashi with blooming youth and beauty lying in intoxication with her master. This was the natural social consequence emerging out of a large number of women slaves within the household. It might, of course, happen, although very rarely, that a master gave the status of wife or daughter-in-law to his female slave. On the reverse the Jatakas furnish instances of the master's wife and daughter falling in love with or marrying their male slaves.

Another evil practice which originated from the early years of Hindu Civilization and continued right down to the recent time, till it was completely abolished



by law, was the use of sweet blonds as the Devadashis in the Hindu temples.

The Devadashis were pretty slave girls who were compelled to be attached to the various Hindu temples of India. The Devadashis were usually purchased from their poor parents or slave merchants in their infancy by the priests of the different temples all over the country. They were carefully reared up by them. They were well trained in music, dancing and other fine arts. Outwardly they were married to gods of the temples they were attached to, and they were considered as sacred beings and, therefore, could not be touched by others. They were supposed to dance and sing in the temple every day in the morning and evening during the Arati ( prayer and worship ) before the altar of God. A Devadashi could never legally marry any human being during her life time. Sometimes, the kings and rich men also presented to the temples many beautiful slave girls who were confined there as the Devadashis. A Devadashi was severely dealt with if she married a commoner and tried to fly away.

But curiously enough, these sweet blonds who were ravishingly beautiful, were secretly enjoyed by the priests. They were nothing but the concubines of the priests of the temples, who could utilise them according to their own sweet will. It was an open secret, and this sort of prostitution has been tolerated by the society with saintly patience for centuries.

The priestly class people exploited men for centuries in various ways in the name of religion. They

victimised numerous people through ages whoever stood in their way. In the name of inquisition the priests burnt thousands of harmless people to ashes in the mediaeval Europe.

But such an exploitation of woman bodies in the name of religion has perhaps no parallel in the history of human civilization.

The earlier sources laid down the principles of treatment of the slaves by their masters. And the code of treatment of a slave by a master and of reciprocal duties and relations as formulated in didactic pieces is fairly enlightened and high. In the words of Buddha slaves and servants form the nadir among the six quarters that the Aryan master has to protect ; and (1) he assigns them work according to their strength, (2) supplies them with food and wages, (3) tends them in sickness, (4) shares with them unusual delicacies. (5) grants leave at times. The slaves and workmen respond to such good ministration in five ways. : (1) They rise before him, (2) They lie down to rest after him. (3) They are content with what is given to them, (4) They do their work well, (5) They carry about his praise and good fame.

But still the fundamental fact of the legal position of the slave was his complete loss of personality.

From the above we can safely assume that their condition was no better than that of cattle, because the slaves might be bought, sold, loaned or given away. Thus, an abundance of husbands, wives, brothers, sis-

ters, fathers, mothers and young children too, were sold separately or in lots to suit the convenience of the purchaser ; and that soul immortal once bought with blood and anguish by God, when the earth shook, rocks rent and the graves were opened, could be sold leased, mortgaged, exchanged for groceries or dry goods to suit the phase of trade or the fancy of the purchaser.

But the rigidity of the institution did not mean that a slave was altogether without hope of freedom. Different procedures were to be followed for the emancipation of different kinds of slaves. According to Narada, a slave born at his master's house, one purchased, one received by gifts and obtained by inheritance could not be freed from bondage except by the favour of the master. Some other kinds of slaves :—one who was enslaved for debt or one on account of his having sexual relations with a female slave was released on parting with her. The Arthasastra enjoins, and the Vassantara Jataka shows that a slave could be released if somebody paid his price fixed at the time of sale or bequest. The exiled prince who gave away his children as slaves, put a price on them as one puts a price on cattle. Eventually the grandfather of the children paid their price and procured their immunity. One made captive in fight, according to Narada, and one “won through wager” and one voluntarily enslaved were to be released on giving a substitute of equal capacity. Moreover, those who were enslaved by forcible means, must be emancipated by the king, for their slavery was not legal.

There were also definite procedures to release a



slave from bondage. One who was pleased in his mind with the services of his slave, and wished to emancipate him, would take from his shoulder a jar filled with water and smash it. He then sprinkled water, grain and flowers on his head and declared him a free man thrice. At last he dismissed him with his face turned towards the east. According to Yajnavalkya and Narada, a slave could earn his freedom provided he saved his master's life from an imminent danger.

In ancient times the slaves were, in most cases, treated brutally and contemptuously. They had no social status, prestige or position. They could neither own any personal property, nor could they give any evidence in any law courts. A slave or a detected criminal could not get himself admitted into any educational institutions or universities.

The condition of the slaves depended much upon the nature of their masters. The benevolent masters used to treat their slaves generously, and in most cases like their sons. Examples are not rare testifying to the fact that many slaves would inherit the properties of their masters along with their benevolent masters' sons. On the other hand, there were cruel and headstrong masters, who derived a heinous pleasure in torturing their slaves. But in any case the masters had no right over the lives of their slaves or their sons or daughters and to abandon them in old age. Earlier sources laid down rules of humane treatment, because some law books limited the right of a master to give corporal punishment to his slave. Slaves, when they did something wrong, could be



beaten with a rope or a cane, but only on the back and not on the head. If a master beats them otherwise he should be punished as a thief.

The condition of the slaves or dashas remained almost the same in the later Hindu period. In the reign of king Harshavardhan, the slaves appeared to have been serving in the adjoining lands of the Buddhist monasteries. The king donated large portions of lands to the Buddhist monasteries and sangharas and the slaves were supposed to work there as agricultural labourers. During the rule of Palas and Senas in Bengal in the 7th to 12th century A. D., we see slaves are being used by royal and other physicians as objects of experiments. Thieves, criminals and other accused persons were first sentenced to death by the judges. But they were not put to death. The king did them the favour of reducing their sentences to slavery. And they were allotted to the physicians, ie, Rajvaidyas and Vaidyas for experiments. The Ayurvedic physician carried on researches with different kinds of herbs and poisonous drugs as medicines. Medicines like 'Suchikabharana' were prepared from snake's venom. To know the effects of their medicines, they wanted to apply them to human beings. But it was a dangerous thing, because the man upon whom such poisonous medicines were experimented could die at any time. So previously they applied the drugs to creatures like monkeys, cats and dogs. But this did not prove very much helpful. That is why they felt the necessity of applying them to living human

bodies. Their demand became so very persistent that the Pala and Sena kings devised the aforesaid methods. These poor creatures were branded on their foreheads, and they were absolutely reserved for the purpose of experiments by the royal physicians. Sometimes these poor people died instantaneously and sometimes after suffering from protracted illness. The physicians applied medicines to them from time to time and watched the results. They could operate surgical instruments, cut out the veins to test the different categories of blood and their improvements, if any, after the applications of their medicines. They could do any kinds of experiment whatever act of inhumanity it might be. Very little importance was attached to the lives of these poor creatures ; because the physicians were not in any way held responsible for their death, nor any punishment could be inflicted upon them for this. But we must bear in mind in this connection that other kinds of slaves, viz. Grihaja or Udaradasha, etc., were not meant for such fatal experiments. Only notorious villains, rogues, criminals and robbers were exposed to such serious consequences after their enslavement.

This reflects very clearly a good deal of light upon the ancient Hindu social and political life of India. It shows that the kings were great patrons of medical science and did much to help their physicians for their advancement of knowledge and improvement of the ancient medical science and surgery. But they did it at the cost of the lives of the slaves, to which they attached

no importance. The lives of the slaves were, atleast in this case, proved to be less valuable than even those of creatures like cats and rats, dogs and monkeys.

Slavery existed as a constant factor in the social and economic life of the ancient world throughout the entire period of ancient history. Its validity as a system of labour was never seriously questioned. No attempt to abolish it was made by any ancient Government, nor did any ancient religious body, even the Christian church, challenge the right of its believers to own slaves. Although Buddhism and Jainism had great humanizing influence in the ancient Indian society for several centuries, they did not utter a single word in favour of the abolition of slavery. Even Asoka, the great patron of Buddhism and supporter of Ahimsa, only asked his people to grant kind and proper treatment to slaves and hired servants. Slavery was thus accepted as a part of the general labour system in India, as in the ancient countries of the world.

Before we proceed further to deal with slavery in the later period, we intend to compare the condition of the Indian slaves with their brethren in the countries of the Near East, Greece and Rome. It will be perhaps not a blunder to hold the view, that the condition of the Indian slaves was much better than that of their European brethren. Dr. Atindra Nath Bose is substantially correct in holding this view. And in support of his argument Dr. Bose quotes the account of Megasthenes, a Greek traveller who visited the court of Chandragupta. But Dr. S. K. Maity, in his work—"The Economic Life of



Northern India in the Gupta Period," disagrees with Dr. Bose's view on the pretext of the comparative smallness of India's slave population. But in my humble opinion, slavery existed in India, no doubt, as an important social institution, but in a milder form. The contemporary literature proves this beyond any doubt.

Literature is the mirror of society. As a mirror reflects a human face, literature also reflects the contemporary social pictures clearly. We can visualise the contemporary society quite distinctly, at least some of its important features as we go through the works of Kalidasa, *Mudra Rakshas* etc. The literary works of the ancient Indian writers, provide us with a furtive glimpse of the condition of the *dashas* (*Mrichchakatika*, etc.). We can assume from this that the condition of the slaves was not so horrible as in the European or Near Eastern countries. We cannot but shudder with horror as we read the works of Polybius, Cicero, Aristotle, Herodotus and Sappho, which elaborately deal with the condition of the slaves in ancient times. The masters were the sole lords of the life and death of their slaves. No laws were known, by which a cruel master, who killed his slaves, could be punished. For trifling mistakes, e.g. for stealing a mirror a slave was put to death by crucifixion, In case of adultery—a male or female slave was sure to be stoned to death. The persons embracing Christianity in ancient Rome during the reign of Nero, were enslaved and thrown before hungry lions and other beasts of prey. Such were the horrible conditions of the slaves in European



countries, and the literary works of the master artists of the age, provide us with an unusual glimpse of the contemporary position of the slaves.

But here in India, it is distinctly laid down by Narada and Yajnavalkya that no master could beat his slaves recklessly to death. Moreover, they were not deemed as the master of the lives of their slaves. There were some provisions restricting the cruelty and torture of slaves by their masters.

So we can come to the conclusion that the conditions of the slaves were much better in India, in comparison with their brethren in other countries. It existed in ancient India, comparatively in a milder form.

## CHAPTER II

### SLAVERY IN MUSLIM INDIA

Slavery existed in India from the very earliest times. Sometimes, it was suppressed to some extent during the reigns of great emperors, but it was, it may be safely asserted, never completely wiped out. It existed with more or less vehemence, during the Hindu and the great Muslim periods, and continued through the Portuguese, right down to the British period. It never failed to hold its own as a very important social and political institution of India, until in the British period in the nineteenth century it assumed immense proportions.

Slavery continued to exist as an important social and political institution in the Muslim period. The Muslim invasion began in India with the Arab conquest of Sind in A.D. 712. The annexation of the Punjab by Sultan Mahmud must have involved extensive settlement of his coreligionists in that province and the systematic conquest of India begun by Muhammed of Ghor towards the close of the twelfth century, opened the flood-gates wide to the Muslim immigrants.

From time immemorial the fertile plains of India have attracted the notice of foreign invaders, and even in modern times one can detect the sinister look of nations

wistfully turned towards the former 'fairest Jewel in the crown of England'. The history of ancient India abounds in records of foreign invasions. The pre-Muhammedan foreigners, in most cases, came from central Asia and belonged to diverse races and nationalities. Although for a time they made their power felt, they never became a distinct factor in Indian politics. They had to succumb to the assimilative power of Hinduism and sooner or later became merged in the general body of Hindu population. The immigrant Muhammedans, unlike their predecessors, never became absorbed in the Hindu population. They indeed became thoroughly neutralised but were never Hinduised. Even to this day, the Mussalmans retain their distinctiveness and form a separate community side by side with their Hindu brethren. Like their different religious customs and laws, the condition of the Muslim slaves was also somewhat different from their Hindu brethren in ancient times. Slavery existed throughout the mediaeval period of the Muslim world as a very important social and political institution.

Slavery, in the Muslim period, as in the past, originated from the laws of wars. Like Christianity, observes Prof. Melvin M. Knight, Islam tolerated slavery and encouraged the enslavement of enemies. It is worth while to note that even now it exists in Arabia—the only country where this trade is being carried on in full swing completely ignoring the charters of the U.N.O.

Slavery diminished, holds Prof. Will-Durant, from mediaeval Europe as serfdom increased. In the twelfth-century England, it was mostly confined to household

services, in France north of the Loire it was negligible, and in Germany, it existed in a milder form. In the Scandinavian countries it was completely absent. In Europe, it was the serfs, not the slaves, points out Prof. Will-Durant, who made the bread of the medieval world. But in Muslim countries no compunction was felt in capturing Habshis, Negroes, Tartars, Turks and Muslim slaves for menial service on the estates of the Amirs or Omrahoes or for sale in the different parts of the Muslim Empire or the Byzantine lands. The Arab merchants found it a very profitable business to deal in slave trade. The slave hunters of Arabia captured slaves mostly from Ethiopea and other parts of the African Jungles, and exported them in the newly expanded Islamic Empire. They were generally known as Habshi slaves, and were exported even to India ; and we find in the later period that the Habshi slaves are playing a very important role in the administration of Delhi Sultanate, Bahamani Kingdom and in Bengal also.

After the establishment of Muslim rule in India in the 12th century A.D., slavery came to this country with them in a new form. Prisoners of wars, criminals, thieves and dacoits and men of other religious orders, such as Hindus and Buddhists were sold out as slaves. It was a common practice of the Turkish rulers of India to take as prisoners the wives, sons, dependants of the vanquished Hindu rulers and their attendants. When Taimur Long came to Delhi marching along the river Sind, he captured about one lakh of Hindus



whom he planned to sell as slaves in his own country. But he was horrified with their number and ruthlessly butchered them lest they revolted against him.

He returned home with about one lakh of Hindu prisoners both men and women, who were sold as slaves in the different parts of his empire. Abdur Razzak observes, that Moulana Nasiruddin, one of the chief ecclesiastics, who in all his life had never slaughtered a sheep, put fifteen Hindus to the sword. History repeated itself when Nadir Shah invaded India in the 18th century inflicting a crushing defeat on Muhmmud Shah and looted the treasury of India and mercilessly butchered thousands of inhabitants of Delhi and returned to Persia with the Kohinur and a large number of prisoners who were sold out as slaves. Utbis' account is full of stories of indiscriminate massacre of all those Hindus who fell into the hands of Mahmmud after the capture of a town or fort. We also hear of a large number of such unfortunate Hindus being carried away as slaves. The policy of Sultan Mahmmud was followed by some later Muslim conquerors also. Referring to the Muslim victory in Gujerat in A.D. 1197, a contemporary Muslim writer says :—"Most of their leaders were taken prisoners and nearly fifty thousands infidels were despatched to hell by the sword and more than twenty thousand slaves fell into the hands of the victor ( Ref. Utbi, Page 117 ). After the capture of the fort of Kalinjor, according to the same authority, fifty thousand men and women came

under the collar of slavery. ( Ref. Ibid page 178 & 231 ). Utbis' detailed account clearly shows that these slaves were, as soon as they became the properties of the Muslim masters, converted to Muslim Faiths.

Slaves, in the Muslim period, were meant for various purposes. In most cases they were engaged for hard and menial labour. They were also engaged as domestic servants in the houses of rich nobles and aristocrats ( Omrahoes, Amirs and Jaigirdars. ). It was a common stock in trade to sell the slaves as domestic servants, eunuchs, concubines or prostitutes in India. The conversion of male slaves as Khojas or eunuchs with their male organs mutilated was a common stock in trade with the Muslims in India as well as other Islamic states. They were supposed to work, in most cases, as the guards of the royal harems and also in the harems of the nobles. They are also known to have served as the bodyguards of the Muslim chieftains. Tartars, Turks, Arabs, Afghans, Habshis and sometimes the natives of the soil were also converted into eunuchs or khojas by means of surgical operations. Malik Kafur, the great and brave general of Alauddin Khilji, who made an extensive conquest in the Deccan, was also a Khoja slave in his earlier life. This hateful and shameless practice was invented by the Muslims with the object of protecting their Begums and other women of the harem from the male servants or guards, who after their conversion into khojas were considered not at all harmful.

The accounts left by famous Muslim scholars, courtiers and European travellers afford an unusual glimpse on the slavery in the Muslim period in India. Alberuni, Ferista, Amir Khusru, Nasiruddin, Abdur Rezzak and Iban Batuta had left vivid accounts on the contemporary social and economic condition of India. The accounts of Barnier and Tavernier—two great French tourists also equip us with most valuable information of the Muslim period. From the accounts of Barnier, we come to know that the Emperor of Ethiopia sent an embassy to Delhi Sultanate, and with his ambassador he sent rich gifts and twenty-four Habshi slaves, who were due to be converted into khojas after their arrival at Delhi. Barnier accompanied the party and left a very vivid and interesting account of the journey he undertook.

We have already discussed that the captives of war, criminals, kidnapped persons and men of other religions who were described as kafers, were enslaved in the Muslim period. Poor people in time of scarcity, flood or famine also sold their children, wives as slaves to rich men or slave traders for a limited or unlimited period. Meher Unnesa, later on known as Nurjahan, was born of a poor parent and sold to Emperor Akbar by her father in her infancy. The robbers, dacoits and slave traders sometimes forcibly captured a party of travellers bound for pilgrimages or villagers and sold them as slaves. There was no law to prevent such barbarism. On the contrary, they were encouraged by the Foujdars or provincial chiefs.



Slavery in the Muslim world had few special characteristics. Household slaves rather than field slaves were the rule. The slaves were supposed to perform all sorts of household works. The female slaves served as the attendants of their mistresses. All the menial and tiresome domestic works were naturally performed by the slaves. Slaves were also engaged as agricultural labourers.

One of the interesting features of slavery in the Muslim period in India was that no kafer, i.e. one who was not a Mussalman, could own a Muslim slave. A Mussalman, on the other hand, could purchase and become the master of a Hindu, Buddhist or Christian slave. The Muslim laws had strictly forbidden the non-Muslims to become the masters of the Muslim slaves. And if a Hindu, Buddhist, Christian or a man of any other religious order owned a Muslim slave, he was considered as a heinous criminal according to the existing laws of the country. And if detected, such a kafer was sure to be punished as a thief. He was usually sentenced to a long term of imprisonment and could be fined. His slaves or Bandis were either confiscated by the Kajis and despatched to the rulers as their properties, or sold out to a Mussalman or set free. The Mussalmans were the rulers of the country, and it appeared to be quite intolerable to them that kafers should hold Mussalmans in bondage. Hence this peculiar law came into existence in the Muslim administered India in the mediaeval period. The Mussalmans, as soon as



they became the masters of the kafer slaves, would invariably convert them to the Muslim faith. The slaves had to embrace the religion of their masters, this was the custom and law in the Muslim period in India.

Religion was, therefore, given primary importance in the Muslim-administered India as in the Christian world, while deciding the status and legal position of the slaves and their masters.

Treatment of slaves depended much upon the nature of the masters. There were many kind-hearted and generous masters who treated their slaves very kindly and generously and made no difference with their own children. The slaves were in many cases brought up in the houses of their masters like their own children. They would inherit the properties of their masters with their masters' sons. Sometimes their masters got their daughters married to their slaves, and the slaves inherited all the properties and titles of their masters. The Muslim rulers had many personal slaves who were sometimes treated very generously and enjoyed a superior social status to other people. Many Amirs, Omrahoes and nobles rose to such high positions from slavery by royal favour. The idea was that Sultan was the Lord of the universe and all his subjects were his slaves. He was their sole master of life and death. So their personal slaves used to enjoy more social status and prestige than anybody else. The rulers of the Slave Dynasty were all slaves in

their earlier days, but they rose to such high positions by virtue of their own merit, earnestness of zeal and dogged perseverance. The Slave Dynasty included a succession of brilliant rulers of exceptional ability, who made extensive conquests and established a well-governed empire. The first ruler of the dynasty, Sultan Kutubuddin Ilok ( A.D 1196—1200 ) was a slave of Muhammed Ghorī. His successor and son-in-law Sultan Shamsuddin Iltutmish was his slave. Ghiasuddin Balban, the greatest Sultan of the slave dynasty, was also a slave in his youth.

But there were also many cruel masters who treated their slaves harshly and mercilessly. But there were provisions restricting the cruelty of the masters. No master could beat his slaves recklessly to death. If he did so, he was severely dealt with. Once a cruel master killed his slave by whipping him excessively. His mother, who was a widow, lodged a complaint against that Omrah to Sultan Ghiasuddin Balban, who became so wild with rage that he sentenced that noble man to death. He was beaten many hundred times with a cane and died consequently. He gave exemplary punishment to the Governors of Budaun and Awadh for reported cruelty to their slaves and servants. This proves that the condition of the slaves was not generally very bad. In most cases they were happy and used to live a normal life.

But the most evil feature of slavery was the use of female slaves or Bandis as prostitutes or concubines.

The beautiful girls were stolen in their infancy from their parents by the thieves or slave traders. They were reared up by them, and when they grew up, they were either sold to the royal families, rich nobles and aristocrats or to the owners of slums. They were used entirely for sexual enjoyment by their licentious masters. The Muslim harems, especially the Mughal harems, were filled with thousands of such beautiful Bandis, who were either stolen from their parents in their infancy by thieves or slave-traders, or purchased from poor Hindu parents or forcibly snatched away from their parents or husbands. In Delhi, an exhibition was yearly organised in which thousands of Bandis were brought and exhibited. They were purchased mostly for the royal harems. Rich nobles and aristocrats also purchased them in large numbers. They were usually meant for the sexual enjoyment of the princes and nobles, and they served in their middle and old ages as maid-servants in the harems. Young female slaves, observes Melvin Knight, were often the concubines of their masters. Sometimes the princes would marry beautiful slave girls either secretly or openly. The Bandis, after their marriage with the princes, were elevated to the rank of princesses and Begums. Reference may be made in this connection to the Udipuri Begum of Alamgir. She was a Christian slave girl who was kidnapped by slave traders and sold to the royal harem for many thousand dinars. She was a matchless beauty and married to Aurangzeb and ultimately became his most favourite Begum. The autobiography of Princess



Zahanara reveals this. The Muslim rulers and nobles derived a lucrative pleasure in filling their harems with large numbers of slave girls. These slave girls also served as the personal attendants of the Begums. They were also presented to another person as dowry with their mistress when she was married to him. The price of a female slave depended mainly upon her beauty, age and other personal qualities ; and of a male slave upon his physique, health, vigour and valour. A female slave who was well versed in music and other fine arts and crafts and at the same time beautiful, was usually sold out for many hundred dinars. The same was also the case with beautiful and accomplished male slaves. Malik Kafur was sold in a slave market in Gujerat for a thousand dinars. Usually the price of a Bandi was Re. 1/- only and that of a Gholam annas -18/-, holds Dr. Surendra Nath Sen, and Utbi remarks that slaves were so plentiful that they became cheap. But we must keep this in our mind in this connection that about eight maunds of rice could be purchased at that time for one rupee.

Brothel houses were run and dancing parties were maintained with the female slaves who were used as prostitutes. They could also be forcibly enjoyed by others or leased by their masters. Their offsprings were sold out as slaves. But the children of a Bandi, after her marriage with a Shahajada, were also treated as legitimate children. They would inherit royal titles and enjoy equal status and position with other children of their father. They could even ascend the



throne. Slaves were also appointed as high officials and they served their masters loyally.

Slaves usually received good treatment from their masters. Their masters, moreover, could not leave them in their old ages. Inter-marriages between slaves and free men were also allowed and recognised by laws which was not permissible in the Christian countries, and Pope Gregory I approved laws forbidding slaves to marry free Christians.

Muslim masters, in their old age, liked to set their slaves free. Release from slavery was a common thing in the Muslim period. But the women slaves, specially those who were confined in royal harems, were completely without any hope of release from their bondage. There was no hope of release or escape until and unless God smote them with death.

Being valuable, slaves secured their freedom for valuable consideration or out of the piety of masters, which might be stimulated by the hope of reward in another world. The freeing of a Muslim slave was regarded as a pious act. A slave could be freed by will, even by a clearly expressed verbal will. Examples are not rare to show that many Muslim slave-owners, on the eve of their death, liked to release their slaves from bondage. They did so in accordance with the teachings of their Prophet Muhammed, who had always taught his disciples not to own slaves. Muhammed, further, laid down that the soul of any master, who would release at least one of his slaves before he dies, would go to Behasta (heaven), and God himself would receive him

there He asked his followers to treat the captive slaves generously. Moreover, the Koran never admitted slavery as a recognised institution. And the Muslim slave-owners of India generally treated their slaves generously and leniently throughout the Muslim rule.

## CHAPTER III

### SLAVERY IN PORTUGUESE INDIA

Slavery began to take a new shape with the weakening of the Mughul Empire and the coming of the Portuguese along with other European people of different countries. The form of the institution became considerably rigid in the later period of Indian history, for about three hundred years, viz. 15th to 17th centuries, the Portuguese carried on slave trade most vigorously, and thousands of Indian men and women were exported as slaves to the different parts of the world by the notorious Portuguese slave traders.

From time immemorial, India carried on an extensive trade, both maritime and overland, with Europe. The products and manufactures of India were in great demand in western marts. This trade was particularly brisk during the first three centuries of the Christian era, when the eastward expansion of the Roman empire facilitated commercial intercourse between the East and the West. But the old trade routes through Egypt and up the Persian Gulf through Syria were closed in the seventh century when the Arabs conquered out these countries. Thenceforward the bulk of the Indian trade was monopolised by the Arabs and it was

they who carried the Indian merchandise to the markets of the Levant. A portion of the trade also passed across Central Asia to the shores of the Black Sea and on to Constantinople. But with the capture of Constantinople by the Turks the overland route was also closed. Thenceforth the Eastern commerce became the monopoly of the Italian cities of Genoa and Venice, a monopoly which they guarded with extreme jealousy. The other nations of Europe who had no ports on the shores of the Mediterranean, were thus shut out from participation in the lucrative trade with the East, and they began to exert themselves to discover a non-Mediterranean sea-route to India. So the desire of the Europeans to have a share in the trade with the East led them to discover a new sea-route leading to India. To Portugal belongs the credit of this discovery. Having been patronised and encouraged by the 'Navigator' Prince Henry of Portugal, a succession of Portuguese sea captains crept furthur and further down the western shores of Africa. In 1487, Bartholomew Diaz was carried by storms past the Cape of Good hope. His explorations pointed the way which, ten years later, was followed by another Portuguese navigator named Vasco da Gama. In 1497, he sailed from Portugal with three little ships and following the route of Duaz, doubled the Cape of Good Hope and reached Calicut in 1498. Thus was discovered the long-sought for sea-route to India.

The Portuguese were notorious sea pirates. Through-



out the sixteenth century the Portuguese were masters of the Eastern seas and had the absolute control of the Indian sea-borne foreign trade. In India their chief settlements were Goa, Daman, Diu and Cochin. They had also occupied Ceylon, the island of Socotra near the entrance of the Red Sea, Ormuz in the Persian Gulf and Malacca in the Far East. In the poet's words it may be said that Portugal held 'the gorgeous East in fee.' The first two able governors of Portuguese possessions in India, De Almeida and Albuquerque aimed at expanding Portuguese empire in India and to strengthen it to be the most powerful power, both politically and commercially in India. They had to face strong opposition from the Arab merchants, but they ruthlessly stamped them out as they were men of undaunted spirits and very powerful sea pirates.

The Portuguese would not remain content with these mere conquests. They began trading with different kinds of Indian goods, and they found it most profitable to deal in Indian slaves. Slavery as a profitable trade flourished rapidly in the Portuguese territories and colonies in India. Goa was the headquarters of slave trade markets, where slaves were brought together and then distributed for sale in the different parts of the Portuguese territories. The Portuguese inflicted crushing defeats upon the Arabs. They used to bear a grudge against them. And for this reason they used to plunder their ships on Indian and Arabian seas very frequently and captured

the Arab sailors as well as other Muslims and sell them as slaves. The slaves were usually sold out in Portuguese territories in India and outside. They were very harshly treated. Slave gangs were in most cases engaged as hard and manual labourers. They also worked as agricultural and commercial labourers and porters. Roads, castles, household constructions and shipyard-buildings were worked out by them. The poor creatures who were ever entrapped by the slave traders' gang, were altogether without any hope of release from their bondage.

A most interesting feature of slavery in this time was the use of Indian slave women as the brides of the Portuguese colonists. Albuquerque sought to extend Portuguese influence in India by colonising selected areas with a mixed population formed out of the intermarriage of the Portuguese with Indian women. For this purpose he encouraged mixed marriages. Indian women either kidnapped or forcibly snatched away from the adjoining villages, were brought to Goa for sale as slaves. They were made to stand in rows for exhibition.

The intending Portuguese soldiers who wanted to marry such women, marched and passed by them and selected their brides out of these slave-girls who stood in rows. But this policy was a failure and resulted in the creation of a large class of degenerate Portuguese half-caste. Most of the Goanese people of modern time having Portuguese names and Portuguese as their mother tongue, are the descendants of those early Indo-Portuguese mixed marriages.

The Portuguese pirates did not spare Bengal, the most fertile, thickly populated and economically as well as commercially the most developed part of India. They turned their eyes very soon to Bengal.

The low-lying Sunderban area at the southernmost parts of Bengal in the district of 24-Parganas, is now nothing but a dense forest infested with Royal Bengal tigers and other wild beasts. But even in the times of the Baravuiyans it was a most thickly populated, economically developed and commercially prosperous area with many towns, villages and ports. Hiuen-Tsang, the Chinese traveller, mentioned in his accounts that there were one hundred beautiful Hindu temples of great artistic merit and thirty Buddhist temples and Sangharams in the southern districts of Bengal, which were known as Samatat at that time. He visited this place about the 7th century A. D. during the rule of Harshabardhan. The people of this area were mostly tradesmen, business men, fishermen, and peasants. They carried on business regularly with Burma, Ceylon, Sumatra, Java, Siam and China including the whole of the Malayn peninsula. The Portuguese came to plunder this golden part of land. They began to plunder the villages and small towns, mostly situated by the sea-shore, with cannons, guns and other deadly weapons in the later period of 15th century. The villagers were quite helpless to cope with these notorious sea pirates. Whoever dared to stand before them with arms, was sure to die on the spot. So most of the villagers had to surrender. And all of them were captured and brought together in the Portu-



guese ships. Their house and granaries were looted out and set to fire. Then the Portuguese pirates demanded ransom from them for their release. If their relatives or persons of distant villages paid due ransom, they were released. The amount of ransom usually varied according to the economic condition and social prestige of each captive. The headman of the village (Mandal), and the rich Zamindar or other aristocratic persons had to pay very heavy amount for their release. The poor persons who were unable to pay ransom were fastened with heavy chains and brought on to the decks of the ships. They were sold out as slaves to Arakan, the land of the Mogges, Sumatra, Java, Ceylon, Malacca and other lands, far and near. But about two thirds or more of their living cargoes perished on board in the sea, because they could hardly stand the unthinkable torture and inhuman acts of cruelty done to them.

The Portuguese pirates first of all made these prisoners stand on the deck of the ship in a long line irrespective of men and women. Then they would make two holes, about one inch in size, in both the hands of the prisoners with the help of the sharp pivot of an iron rod and pass on two sets of ropes on the holes of the prisoners' hands. The prisoners were so helpless that they could hardly dream of escaping. Then the Portuguese used to throw only a few seers of rice on the deck, which they had to swallow by licking them up with their tongues. Every day many of them died, being unable to bear



this inhuman torture. Some died of sepsis, because the wounds of their hands would invariably get decomposed. The Portuguese were so cruel, so mean, base and vile that they threw off the corpses of the slaves cutting off their arms lest the rope was torn or damaged. They used to taunt and jeer at the women slaves in the most vulgar and obscene languages and flogged the slaves practically for nothing with Koras—a deadly thing—each stroke of it took away their skin and blood ran through their bodies. The beautiful female slaves were forcibly ravished by the Portuguese slave traders while on the ship. They were sold to the different slave markets of the aforesaid countries for heavy prices. These Portuguese slave traders were dealers in human flesh and blood. They were more loathsome and venomous than the deadliest vipers. They were inhuman monsters in the guise of men.

They caused such a wholesale destruction to the lives and properties of the people of southern Bengal along the coasts of the Bay of Bengal, that most of the inhabitants fled away from there. They moved to the northern parts of the country and penetrated as far as the districts of Hooghly, Burdwan, Birbhum, Rajshahi, Pabna, Nadia, etc. And thus, one of the richest and most fertile lands of the country, became a desolate and lonely track of land infested with wild beasts and robbers, due to the vandalism of the Portuguese sea-pirates. All the temples, which were the richest specimens of Hindu art and architecture, were ruined by these barbarian inroads.

Poet Alawal was a celebrated Muslim poet of Bengal in the seventeenth century. He elaborately deals with the tyranny and ruthless vandalism of the Portuguese sea-pirates in his famous poetical work entitled "Padmavati". He was the poet laureate of the Arakan king Thodo Mintar (1645-52), who had a special knack for bringing together poets, writers, artists and craftsmen in his court. He used to purchase such qualified men as slaves from the Portuguese pirates. The poet himself was captured by Harmad—the leader of the Portuguese pirates and his father was killed while offering a stubborn resistance to them. We get a vivid description of the notorious pirates in his works.

But the power of the Portuguese declined as quickly as it had risen. Their conduct provoked hostility and hatred on all sides. Their trading method was piratical and they derived as much profit from plundering Arab and other commercial ships as from legitimate commerce. Their officials were arrogant and corrupt and their treatment of the conquered people especially of the Muhammedans, was extremely cruel. Their attempt to force all people in their dominion in India to adopt Christianity produced widespread discontent, and the atrocious persecutions which resulted from such insane attempts, made their very name odious to the people. And a dominion founded upon such a policy cannot last long. But the event which contributed most to the decline of the Portuguese power in the East was the union of the crowns

of Portugal and Spain under Philip II in 1580. This union not only made Portugal's interests subservient to those of Spain, but dragged her into wars with the Dutch and the English who were then at war with Spain. The European complication drained the resources of Portugal rendering that small country with its limited population quite unable to bear the strain of maintaining a distant empire in the East. The Dutch and English powers conquered all the Portuguese territories in the Mediterranean Far-East and India except Goa, Diu and Daman, which still remain as Portuguese pockets in India, and bear testimony to their ancient sea-powers.

The Portuguese people brought about their ruin in India by their own follies. They went so far as to capture two personal Bandis of Mamataz Mahal, the Empress of India, and demanded ransom from the Subadar of Bengal. The Emperor Shah Jahan was already acquainted with their wickedness, before his accession. He was already dissatisfied with their conduct, and he resolved to put an end to them if ever he ascended the throne. When he learnt about the audacity of the Portuguese, he became wild with the rage. The news was a spark to a powder magazine. He at once ordered Kashim Khan, the Subadar of Bengal to ruthlessly massacre and totally stamp out the Portuguese people.

Hoogly was the stronghold of the Portuguese pirates in Bengal. They built up well fortified castles by the side of the river Hoogly, which were surrounded by ditches and decorated with cannons and other deadly weapons.



He was ordered to set about the extermination of the pernicious intruders as soon as possible. Under the royal order, troops were to be sent both by land and water, so that this difficult enterprise might be quickly and easily accomplished. Kashim Khan set about making his preparations, and at the end of the cold season, in 1240 A.H., he sent his son Inayatu-Ulla with Allah-Year-Khan, who was to be the real Commander of the army, and several other nobles, to effect the conquest of Hoogly. The royal army was engaged for three months and a half in the siege of this strong place. The royal force consisted of a large number of infantry, artillery and four big battle ships decorated with cannons, sixty-four dingas, fifty-seven ghrabs and two hundred Jalingas. They started firing heavily on the Portuguese castles. From the beginning of the siege to the conclusion, men and women, old and young, altogether nearly ten thousand of the enemy were killed being either blown up with powder, drowned in water, or burnt by fire. Nearly one thousand brave warriors of the imperial army obtained the glory of martyrdom. Four thousand and four hundred Portuguese of both sexes were taken prisoners and sent to Agra, and nearly ten thousand Hindu and Muslim inhabitants of the neighbouring country who had been kept in confinement by these tyrants were set at liberty. Henceforth the hold of Portuguese sea power completely broke down and they ceased to deal in slave-trade in Bengal and other parts of India so extensively as they did previously.



## CHAPTER IV

### SLAVERY IN BRITISH INDIA

With the weakening of Portuguese power in India, English, Dutch, French and Danish people came to India with the object of carrying on trade. The victory of the English over the Spanish Armada stimulated their maritime enterprise and urged them on to look for colonial and commercial expansion. The report of India's fabulous wealth spread by English and Dutch travellers, aroused in them a strong desire to share in the lucrative Eastern trade. So in 1599, a body of English merchants joined together to fit out an expedition to trade in the East and applied to Queen Elizabeth I for a charter. And the East India Company was incorporated in the year 1700 by a Royal charter of Queen Elizabeth I. Two years later the Dutch East India Company came into existence in a similar way. The East India Company was given the exclusive right to trade with India for fifteen years. The first English factory was established at Surat in 1608. Captain Hawkins managed to obtain the permission of Emperor Jahangir to settle at Surat. Thenceforward the history of the Company was full of prosperity and marked by rapid development. In 1640, the site of Madras was pur-

chased from the Raja of Chandragiri and permission was obtained to build a fortified factory. In Bengal, a factory was established at Hugli in 1651 by virtue of the privileges granted to the Company in return for the medical assistance rendered to the Subadar of Bengal by an English surgeon named Dr. Gabriel Boughton. In 1651, the Company obtained the island of Bombay at the nominal rent of £10 a year from Charles II, who had received it from the Portuguese as part of the dowry of his wife, Catherine of Braganza. In 1700, Job Charnock, the English agent at Hooghly purchased the villages of Sutanati, Kalikata and Govindapur, and the city which began to grow on the sites of these villages came to be known as Calcutta. The Company further legislated its status by securing Farmans or signed privileges from the Emperor Faruksiyyar. Many important concessions were granted to this Company.

The English people came to India as a commercial nation, but they gradually established their supremacy politically over this land. The establishment of British sovereignty in Bengal in 1757 by Lord Clive, after defeating Nawab Sirajuddaula in the battle of Plassey, is an important landmark in the history of India. Thenceforward the history of India enters upon a new epoch. We need not describe how the English power rapidly went on increasing and finally became the paramount sovereign of India, and how India came to be known as the fairest jewel of the British crown in the year 1857, i.e., after the overcoming of the Sepoy

Mutiny and the overthrowing of Bahadur Shah II—the last Mughul Emperor of India by the Britishers ; because this is too well known a story to be discussed again. Rabindra Nath Tagore's poem very beautifully describes the conversion of English commercial power into a victorious paramount authority in India thus :-

“Baniker Mandanda Dekhadila,  
Pohate Sarbari Rajdanda rupe.”

Slavery came to be established as a very rigid and important institution after the establishment of British rule in India under the East India Company in 1757. Its mode and form totally changed from those of the Muslim period. The condition of slaves considerably deteriorated in this period.

We have already discussed that slavery had diminished from the mediæval world as serfdom increased. But it was reintroduced into England in the year 1562 by Sir John Hawkins, the famous sea captain and notorious pirate. Britain had already conquered many islands in the West Indies including the Fizi islands, Jamaica, Bahama etc. It had to set up colonies in America, Canada and British Guiana. In these vast tracts of fertile lands, the English colonists set up many cotton plantations and large portions of fertile lands were also being cultivated. So they required labourers most badly. But where could they get so many hard-working labourers ? In those days, slave trade was being carried in full swing by the Arabs. Captain Hawkins had many hundred thousand acres of agricultural lands and cotton plan-



tations in Jamaica. He planned to engage hardworking Negro slaves as agricultural labourers on these plantations. So like the Arab slave merchants he began to capture Negroes and sell them out as slaves to the cotton planters.

John Hawkins, son of William Hawkins, learnt that an easy way to win riches was to kidnap or buy shiploads of strong and hardy Negroes in West Africa, and sell them to the Spaniards in America and the cotton planters and other colonists of the West Indies. In 1562 and 1564, Hawkins made two enslaving voyages to the Guinea Coast or Asanti land and with the help of Asanti king captured many hundred Negroes both men and women, and sold his 'human cargo' at such a great profit in Hispaniola and Mexico that he came home a wealthy and famous man. He was the founder of the Negro slave trade which made possible the colonization of tropical America by a planter aristocracy cultivating its lands by black labour, and which for more than two hundred years was to be a source of immense gain to English merchants. Neither the English nor the Spaniards had the least care of the cruelty and wickedness of this trade in human flesh. We do not want to go into greater details to describe the inhuman torture, cruelty and horror of this hateful trade as they are known to all. And a hateful pirate and loathsome criminal like Captain Hawkins was greatly encouraged and patronised by Queen Elizabeth I, who was pleased to honour him with a knighthood and an honorary rank of a Ship-Captain, and admitted the validity of



the slave trade as a recognised institution in her empire.

Hawkins was merely a man of business, though terribly efficient in his work, his example being soon followed by others, who began to export thousands of slaves to the newly founded colonies. The slaves were treated most inhumanly by their European masters in that age. In India, also, slavery was established by Warren Hastings during his tenure of office as the Governor-General of Bengal under the East India Company. The condition of slaves in the British-administered India was horrible and was not in any way better than their Negro counterparts in the U.S.A., and the West Indies. Slavery lasted in India as a very hard and rigid institution along with other colonies of the British Empire and was abolished according to an Act of Parliament passed in the year 1833 under the auspices of Wilberforce and Lords Brougham and Grey.

It was Warren Hastings who devised a new method of earning money by selling men as slaves. During his tenure of office, it flourished as a very profitable trade. Dacoits and thieves, according to the laws of the Company, were put to death and each and every member of their families, including their wives and children, was sold as a slave. Hastings also encouraged batches of slave-traders to carry on this trade and helped and patronised them in many ways to increase the slave population in the country. Hooghly, Chandernagar, Khidirpur, Calcutta, Serampore and Chinsura became the centres of slave trade, where the slave-traders would

regularly transact their business with their English and French customers. Slave-hunters mostly collected their slaves from the villages of Bengal. They used to steal young children from their parents and sell them as slaves. They were generally reared up in the houses of their masters quite negligently along with their domestic animals. The slave-merchants also kidnapped or forcibly captured passers-by, villagers and poor people who could hardly have recourse to legal measures. Moreover, it was a period of confusion marked by the absence of law and any well ordered government. Such slave-traders, far from being punished by any laws, either of the Nawab or of the East India Company, were constantly encouraged by them.

Many men would like to sell themselves as slaves to avoid the persecution of the creditors. Defeated gamblers used to sell their wives for a few chips only. A man Kali by name sold out his wife to a man in Burdwan in 1828 for a few rupees.

Two gamblers having been defeated in the game and seeing no other alternative to escape from the persecution of the creditors, wanted to sell out their wives. And one of them sold out his beautiful wife to a harlot for Rs. 10/- only. But the second man was sent to the prison having his wife refused to be sold. ( Ref. Sambad Patre Sekaler Katha, Vol. 1. Page 256. ). This news, however, reminds us of the notorious dice contest of the Mahabharata in which Draupadi was involved. The beautiful women were sold out as slaves. They were usually meant for the sexual pleasure of the rich nobles and

aristocrats, who would buy beautiful and grown up blondes and brunetts from the slave traders to satisfy their ugly desires. Sometimes, the parents sold out or leased or mortgaged their grown up daughters for money. A Vaishnabi of Burdwan was coming to Calcutta accompanied by her 12 years-old daughter to attend the Sradha ( funeral ) Ceremony of late Babu Ramdulal Sarker, but while about half way near Farasdanga, she became quite disappointed to learn that the gift and charity were already made. She, therefore, went to Raja Kishen Chand Bahadur and sold her daughter for Rs. 150/- only and returned home with great pleasure.

Slavery assumed immense proportions at this time throughout the British as well as the French administered India. Colebrook has classified the Indian slaves of this period into seven classes, viz, 1. defeated in war,, 2. Son of a slave who is inherited as a slave, 3. Purchased. 4. Pledged or mortgaged, 5. Received by gift, 6. Inherited and one who becomes so by a court's decree or an order of the government. It may be asserted that Colebrook's classification was based upon the Arthashastra and Manu.

Every day hundreds of dhows and boats, packed with a large number of slaves, both men and women, used to cast anchor in the harbours of Canning, Faltah, Chandpalghat, Chandernagar Khidirpur, and Hooghly. Very close to the banks of the River Hooghly, slaves were exhibited for sale. They were purchased by the European inhabitants of Calcutta and neighbouring places.



European land-owners, Kuthiwals, tradesmen and officials purchased the poor slaves either in a lot or singly. The slaves were confined to domestic servitude. We also get references of self-sold slaves. During the time of the great famine in Bengal in 1769 (which is known as the Chhiattarer Manwantar), many lakhs of people died of starvation. At that time, and also afterwards, many people sold their wives, children and even themselves too, only to make their both ends meet. In Bankim Chandra's Ananda Math, we get a very vivid picture of it. To escape the persecution of the creditors, many debtors also sold their children and wives to the slave traders. We also get a reference of this kind in an article published in the Prabashi with a photograph of the document, in which a Hindu widow Savitri Devi, sells herself along with her daughter and son for thirty-one rupees to the master, for seventy years. We do not know whether she or her children were released from slavery in the course of time after seventy years. The traders always did their very best to increase the number of offsprings of their female slaves, who were also sold out as slaves.

Hindus never purchased or owned slaves at this time, though there were many rich Hindu Zamindars and aristocrats in Bengal. They considered it as an act of great sin to deal in human flesh and blood. For domestic and other hard, manual works, they preferred to engage paid servants. The Muslims purchased slaves and engaged them as domestic servants



or personal attendants, but they treated their slaves generously. But the European slave-owners treated their slaves with great cruelty. There was no spark of heavenly light in their treatment towards their slaves. They converted their slaves to Christianity as soon as they bought them and became their masters.

The slaves were owned in Calcutta by the officials of the East India Company, the Portuguese, the Armenian and other Western inhabitants. The French people also encouraged this trade. They dealt in slave trade and exported the Indian slaves with great profits to Pondichery, Mahe, Carical and the Madagascar. The English people, on the other hand, exported a large number of slaves from India to their newly conquered territories in Borneo, Malaya, Mauritius and Fizi islands. Roads, buildings and other hard and tiresome constructive works were performed by the slaves. The slave trade was one of the most lucrative sources of income in those days.

The oldest issues of the Calcutta Gazette, 'Samachar Darpan' and some other newspapers and old documents preserved in the record rooms of the Calcutta High Court and Writers' Buildings provide us with very valuable sources of information of the slave trade and the position of the slaves in the society. We cannot but shudder with horror as we go through them. The condition of the slaves throughout the Eighteenth and the first half of the Nineteenth century was really very pathetic. Their masters were generally men of the meanest orders and of the lowest stocks. They had

practically no social position in their own country. Very few nobles and aristocrats liked to accept jobs under the East India Company and serve in India. Vulgar and poor people who could hardly make their both ends meet only preferred to come to India. They were greedy, licentious, self-centred, calculative and without any moral scruples at all. In England, these people could hardly dream of meeting their both ends for a day, but here in India, they invariably began to live a very luxurious life. Sri Hari Har Seth has very elaborately dealt with the every-day life of these English upstarts of Calcutta. They were the ordinary servants of the East India Company drawing very small wages. But almost every English servant of the East India Company led a very luxurious life amidst pomp and grandeur with more than a dozen of slaves, men and women, at his beck and call. But where did they get money from? They were very dishonest persons and carried on many illegal trades in this country, filled their pockets by resorting to extortions from the ordinary people of our country. Governor-General Hastings himself had given rise to dandyism and met his heavy expenditures by adopting unfair means. The employees of the East India Company were always anxious to accumulate wealth to maintain themselves in their old age in England, after their retirement from the Company's service. Anyway, the European citizens of Calcutta and near-by areas used to live a very idle, care-free and luxurious life. They could

not stand the hot climate, especially the summer days of Calcutta. The English women generally shaved off their heads being unable to bear the hot weather, and wrapped their whole bodies with wet clothes. Both the ladies and gentlemen spent the summer evenings on the decks of boats ( Bajas ) in the river Hooghly.

All these boats were lighted up with burning candles and hurricane lanterns. They were beautifully decorated too. The European ladies and gentlemen passed the whole night on the deck of the boats in dancing, singing and other kinds of merriment. They very often used to arrange dinner parties and enjoy the dances of Baijis and Natuas with musical performances. These Baijis and Natuas were slaves who were specially trained for the purpose.

The luxurious European people used to own many slaves, most of whom were confined as domestic servants. They had to do many kinds of works. Each slave, according to the nature of his work, was assigned a particular name. They were known as—Nafar (who used to do menial household works), Hukabarkadar, (who was in charge of arranging the smoking of the master), Barkadar (who used to produce cold water by turning the wheel of a machine), Pankhapuller, Hajam (barber), Sahis ( who was in charge of the stables ), Zamadar ( the sweeper ), Aya, Bandi etc. The female slaves usually did the hairdoings and dressings of their mistresses and served them as their personal attendants. They also performed all sorts of domestic works. The English



people could not quench their thirst by drinking ordinary water. The Barkardars cooled the water by turning the wheel of a machine. The slaves did not get a single pice as salary, nor could they earn any money by serving elsewhere in their leisure periods. Moreover, they could not own any property in their own names. In the early Hindu period the slaves could inherit their masters' properties equally with their masters' sons. This practice was also in vogue in the Muslim period in India, and also in the later period till the overthrowing of Emperor Bahadur Shah II. when slavery was prevalent in the Muslim-occupied India side by side with British-administered India. But the slaves were completely deprived of these privileges by the English laws under the Company's rule. The Muslim slave-owners frequently released their slaves from bondage. But this was very rare in the Company's rule. Very few Christian masters released their slaves from bondage in the period under review. The examples are so small in number that they can be counted on finger-ends. If any slave earned any money in any way, his master at once snatched it away from him.

The slaves were usually inherited by the successors of their masters according to the English law of succession. But in case where there was only one slave but many successors, he was sold in an auction sale, and the money was equally divided by the heirs. The slaves could be presented as gifts, leased or mortgaged. Many Indians presented slaves to the high ranking officials of the East India Company with a view to



pleasing them. Many slave-owners found it a very lucrative source of income to lease their slaves to the owners of factories, mills and agricultural lands, where they were made to work very hard as labourers. Their masters would get decent allowances for this. But in case a slave died while working as a hired labourer, the man who hired him had to compensate his master. Hundreds of slaves were thus let out in the neighbouring areas of Calcutta as hired labourers. They had to work very hard throughout the day and their emoluments were enjoyed by their masters who did not give them even a single pie. We have already discussed that the European inhabitants, especially the Company's servants, spent money very lavishly, and so they were naturally indebted. They usually took loans from the rich money-lenders of the country against their slaves, who were considered as their movable properties. Until and unless they cleared up their debts, their slaves were under the custody of their creditors. If a debtor died without clearing up his dues or he failed to pay back the amount he borrowed, his slaves, along with his other properties were sold out in an auction sale through their attorneys. Usually the sale of this kind of slaves took place in the pulpit of Calcutta Municipal Court at Town hall or at the premises of the Chief Presidency Magistrate's Court at Dalhousie area. Many Europeans before their final departure for Europe, sold out their slaves along with their other properties. The sale usually took place in the aforesaid places or at some "Slave warehouses" situ-

ated at Lalbazar, Park Street, Chowringhee, Portuguese Church Street, Kidderpur and Free School Street area.

A Slave Ware-house in Calcutta was a house externally not much unlike many others, kept with neatness. And slaves were kept in different rows with their hands and feet tightly fastened in chains in such ware houses. Here the customers, most of whom were English, French, Portuguese or Armenian, were courteously entertained to see and examine the slaves. Human property was high in the market, and was, therefore, well fed, well-cleaned and looked after, so that it might come to sale sleek, strong and shining. The buyer could, and practically did, examine each and every limb of the slaves before he bought them. Then the sale started and the highest bidder usually became the owner of the slaves. Each owner would receive from the previous owner registered documents for each slave, containing the name, thumb impression, other necessary details and the signature of the previous owner. Each time a registration fee of Rs. 4.25 was charged for handing over the ownership of a slave to another master by the city court. Some of these documents are still kept in the record rooms of the Calcutta High Court and Writers' buildings.

Apart from the aforementioned places and slave-warehouses, the slaves were dealt in exactly like cattle in the different bazars and markets of the towns and cities. The Gholams and Bandis, as the slaves were generally known in those days, were tied to stakes and open for exhibition and examination to the buyers. A

Zaminder bought an able bodied Gholam for Rs. 25/- from the bazar of Bhagalpur while on his way back to Calcutta from Banaras. And he states to have seen about twenty to twenty-five Gholams and Bandis sold out on that day ( January 11, 1810 ) in Bhagalpur, Bihar.

The slaves were branded in their foreheads and breasts with very hot and burning iron sticks. They were fastened with heavy chains and driven away like cattle to their new master's house. These poor slaves performed all the hard jobs of the house. They were mercilessly dealt with by their masters. They were ill-fed and ill-treated. A very small amount of flour was allotted for the slaves. They had to work very hard from the early dawn till late at night. And they prepared their food at the dead of night after the day's most tiresome works. For the slightest mistakes or smallest infractions they were very severely tortured. Sri Hari Har Seth has collected huge materials from the accounts of European tourists and memoirs of the officials, which afford unusual glimpses on slavery in the eighteenth and the early part of the nineteenth centuries in India, especially in Calcutta. The English ladies themselves whipped their slaves very much for trifling mistakes. They did not hesitate to whip even their male slaves with their own hands. They beat them severely until blood ran and they became unable to do so being tired and fed up. The Armenians treated their slaves most heinously and mercilessly. They made their slaves work



throughout the day, and confined them in iron-cages fastening them with fetters and handcuffs by the side of the stables. In the day time their hands were free, but legs were fettered with long chains so that they could move freely. The women slaves were not spared the tortures. Examples are not rare to show that they were most brutally treated. We come to know from the accounts left by a Dutch lady who came here to draw some sketches of the contemporary social pictures, depicting how women slaves were most inhumanly and barbarously treated for very slightest mistakes. They were very often whipped and beaten and kicked. She states to have seen that sometimes women slaves were tied to stakes, their robes being taken off, and then jars after jars of cold water in cold December morning were turned upside down in endless succession upon their heads, and the poor creatures, who were completely naked, were about to die of suffocation. This sort of torture continued for fifteen to twenty minutes before the presence of all the family members and the other slaves with a view to frightening them.

For other offences such as stealing the money of the master, garments and ornaments of the mistress, breaking the utensils and also for indolence the slaves were sent to whipping house establishments. It was the universal custom to send women and young girls to whipping houses and to the hands of the lowest of men who were vile enough to make it their profession to utilise the slave women for shameful purposes.



There were whipping house establishments in Calcutta close to the slave warehouses and municipal magistrates' courts where along with the slave women, many criminals and rogues were also sent by the magistrates for whipping purpose. These houses were run by the Portuguese, Armenians or Muhammedans of the meanest stocks. They charged one anna for giving every lash to the slaves and other persons for correction. Usually the slave masters sent their slaves with a slip ordering the master of the whipping house establishment to give 15 to 20 lashes each time along with his dues in advance. Thus a large number of poor creatures came there with tearful eyes for the purpose of being whipped. They were tied to stakes and flogged for fifteen to twenty times on backs and shoulders. Many fell unconscious and blood ran through their wounds. They came back to their master's house with their backs and shoulders carved with long lines of wounds and blood oozing out from there. Mrs. Sarala Bala Sarkar has published an interesting article in the last Puja special issue of the Ananda Bazar Patrika entitled—"Hastingser-Samay Kalikatar Engrej-Samaj", dealing with the contemporary English social life in Hastings's time. She has gathered her materials from the accounts of some travellers and retired company officials. We get a vivid description of the kind of punishment inflicted on run-away women slaves and other wicked persons from the said article. A woman slave of Mr. Anderson managed to escape, but anyway she was recaptured and brought before a magistrate who ordered her to be flogged ten times

and then be sent to her master's house. This gives us an intimation of the fact of there being some understanding between the European Magistrate and the European citizens of the day.

The slaves could not run away, because they were branded in the different parts of their bodies and clad in a very low and dirty attires, and whoever saw them could detect them at once as slaves and dared not to give them shelter. Moreover, their masters issued warrants, and published the news in the newspapers and whoever could arrest a run-away slave, was properly rewarded by the master. The run-away slaves, if detected, were severely dealt with. They were beaten so excessively that they became almost half-dead. The slaves were ill-nourished, ill-fed and ill-treated by their European masters. They were not attended to by physicians during the time of their illness. Many slaves would die being unable to bear the severe tortures inflicted upon them. But there was no way out. The European slave-masters were not punished for beating their slaves to death. There was none to support the cause of a slave in a suit against the European master. Moreover, the trying magistrate always used to take the sides of their white brethren and release them from the charges of murder and other acts of atrocities. It was established that the slave-owners were the absolute masters of the life and death of their slaves. The highest punishment that a magistrate would inflict upon a slave-owner in those days for ending the life of a slave was to fine him with a very

small amount. The fine usually varied from Rs. 25/- to Rs 50/-.

A very great evil feature of slavery in those days was the use of young and beautiful slave girls as the kept women of the European settlers in India. In those days, the number of European ladies was very small. Most of the European inhabitants were Company's officials. They had to remain unmarried in this country for various reasons. European ladies did not like to come over to this distant land which they considered to be infested with tigers, elephants, cobras and wizards. Furthermore, it was very expensive to maintain European ladies as they liked to live a very luxurious life and spend lavishly. So it was beyond the means of most of the Europeans, living in India, to marry European women and maintain them here. So, most of the European servants of the East India Company remained unmarried and, therefore, without any moral character. The contemporary European society was full of corruption and addicted to immoral practices. Honesty, morality or chastity were completely absent from the contemporary European society. Adultery, immoral practice, lechery, and other vices were the common stock in trade with the European people living in India of those days. Even Hastings himself was a man of questionable moral character, and he first eloped with Baroness Marian Imhoff—a very beautiful German lady, who came to India with her artist husband Baron Imhoff who wanted to make a fortune in India. Hastings managed to get her divorced from the Baron



and then married her amidst great pomp and grandeur. His duel with Col. Francis also took place over a quarrel which sprang from love affairs. So, the Europeans used to live in this country with slave women as husband and wife, and their offsprings who looked very much like Europeans, came to be known as Anglo-Indians. They were very contemptuously brought up with other domestic animals of their fathers. The Europeans lived with Indian slave women as husbands and wives openly, and they were not ashamed of it. They were rather proud of it, because they were men of so low morality that they did not consider it an act of shame. They sometimes married Indian slave girls. The result of this mixed marriage and secret sexual intercourse between the European and their women slaves, was the creation of a large class of degenerate half-caste. They are known as Anglo-Indians. The Europeans never admitted them as their children, nor did they take them to their countries after retiring from the Company's service. Sometimes they left them some properties for maintenance. They were fully aware of the fact that these creatures were nothing but illegitimate children in the eyes of law. They did not hesitate to sell their illegitimate children as slaves before leaving for Europe. They could do so, because their offsprings were regarded as slaves according to the English laws, as they were born of slave-mothers. But in most cases, they inherited their fathers' properties and titles, and their fathers had to legally make them free by means of registered documents. Here also they had to pay



Rs. 4·25/- to the city court for registering such papers. Generous Europeans very rarely released their slaves if they were highly pleased with their service and faithfulness. But such examples were very rare. The early history of the so-called Anglo-Indians can be traced to this period. This degenerate half-caste with European names such as Patrick, Harris, Robinson, De mill, Pinto, Perriera, Jones, etc., and English as their mother tongue, are nothing but the descendants of the slave offsprings of the early mixed marriage and relation between the European slave owners and their women slaves. After the emancipation of the slaves under an Act of Parliament, in 1833, these people of mixed blood formed themselves into a separate class and came to be known as Anglo-Indians. They became favourite of the European ruling class by learning the art of hating and looking down upon the Indians, to whom they were in many respects inferior. They monopolised the important posts of the Railways, Police and Post and Telegraph departments throughout the nineteenth and a greater half of the twentieth centuries, till the independence of India. They called the Indians niggars, blackies and tried to maintain an ivory tower existence of their own, having been blissfully ignorant of their origin.

We can, from the above study, distinctly visualise the miserable position of the slaves in India under the East India Company's rule. The institution became so very rigid in all countries at that time that the slaves were without any hope of release. Their condition was even inferior to that of animals. It was better for a

slave to commit suicide than to live the life of a slave. But there was no way out, until and unless God smote them with death.

The inhuman tortures inflicted upon the slaves and their sufferings excited the sentiments of many a good Englishman, who was deeply moved by the sight of the distress of the slaves. They began to feel by and by that there were something degenerating and degrading inherent in the system. This is quite evident from the letter of Leicester Stanhope which he wrote to the Duke of Gloucester on 18th January, 1823, requesting his Royal Highness to take immediate steps to do away with this inhuman institution from India. In the letter, Mr. Stanhope gave a vivid description of the miserable condition of Indian slaves serving either as agricultural labourers in Karasamandal and Malabar regions, i.e. Arkat, Madurai, Kanara, Koimbatour, Tinniveli, Trichinapalli, Tanjor and Gringi Liptum or in the coal, copper, silver and gold mines in these regions. The slaves were mercilessly exploited by their hard-hearted masters. They had to put on very dirty and torn cloths, and their heads were shaved off to distinguish them from freemen. They were in most cases joined in pairs with iron fetters till the last days of their lives. Their condition was exactly like the barbarian and Oriental slaves doomed in the Delian slave markets.

According to same authority, the price of a boy slave varied from Rs. 4/- to 16/-, while that of a female slave from Rs. 16/- to 24/-. The age, beauty, physique and qua-

lities of the slaves were taken into account to decide their actual price. The price of a male slave varied from Rs. 24/- to 160/-. Rich men had large number of slaves. Women slaves were sold in large numbers to the owners of the slums and brothel houses. (vide Ref. Sangbad Patre Sekaler Katha, Vol. 1. Page 185)

Jean Bodin ( 1596 )—the noted French thinker of political philosophy was perhaps the first man ever to denounce slavery. He was a celebrated writer and directed an attack vehemently against the institution, though it was supported by Aristotle on the ground of universal practice. Aristotle supported the system as it was a large reflection of inequality, and therefore, it was useful. But Bodin quite prudently refuted all these arguments of Aristotle and strongly upheld the cause of millions of depressed souls bound in chain and trampled down under feet.

Bodin's pleas were greatly supplemented by Rousseau—the great French revolutionary writer. The French writers and the French revolution did more than anything else to do away with the evils of slavery.

Slavery was abolished from the British Empire in the year 1833 under the auspices of the Quaker Society led by Lord Brougham, Clarkson, and Wilberforce.

The Quakers were great philanthropists. They were inspired by the writings of Rousseau who said, "vox populi, vox dei"—"the voice of the people is the voice of God." The French revolution was the outcome of the violent feelings of the depressed middle and lower classes of people. There was a sharp clea-



vage between the rich nobility and middle and lower classes of people comprised of intellectuals, clerks, and peasants. The French revolution took place in the year 1789. The revolutionaries dethroned King Louis XVI, beheaded the royal couple, smashed the nobility and established the French republic. They were led by Rousseau's principle—liberty, equality and fraternity. All men are equal and all men have equal rights. They are not the properties of the State. The State, on the contrary, is an association for the general welfare of the people. The French revolution is an important landmark in the history of the freedom of humanity as a whole. It is an epoch-making event in the history of mankind in all time and for all ages, because this revolution, for the first time, unfolded a new chapter in the history of the deliverance of the depressed class of men. But the effects of the French revolution were very little on the English people and England. They were rudely shocked by the unprecedented violence, bloodshed and ruthlessness of the revolution. Moreover, England was a firm believer in monarchy. They could not endure that the French people had beheaded the royal couple and tinged their hands with royal blood. So the political leader of all parties did their very best to keep the English people aloof from the influence of the French revolution. The English people also spontaneously responded to them, since they had a very bitter experience of this sort of royal murder. The despotic rule of Cromwell made them feel very clearly that no purpose would serve if they

would kill their monarch and establish a republic. The blood of King Charles I made them feel this. So politically the French revolution could exert no influence at all upon the English life.

The great wave that broke over Europe in the roar of the Napoleonic wars spent its strength in vain on the political structure of these islands, but the air was long salt with its spray. And the chief effect of the revolution on English life and thought is to be sought in literature rather than in politics. And the poems of Shelley, if not too fanciful to prolong the figure, are the rainbow lights seen in the broken wave. More than the others of that group of English poets who flourished at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and whose work, taken as a whole, gives to English literature its all but greatest glory, Shelley was the inheritor and the exponent of the ideas of the French revolution. The French revolution aroused and then disappointed Wordsworth, causing him to turn away from political ideals and to seek consolation in universal nature ; it made Byron a rebel, and Southey a laureate ; but it gave birth to Shelley.

The idea of the Revolution and the passion of the Revolution glitter and vibrate in Shelley's poems. And these ideas, it must be remembered, in their earlier and cruder political forms, had but a short spell of life. They bred the giant that killed them ; the modern scientific and historical temper finds it well-nigh impossible to regain the outlook of those who stood breathlessly waiting for the revolution of a new heaven

and a new earth. So that it is not to be wondered at if the poetry that springs from the political creed has been to some extent involved in the downfall of the creed. 'The people of England,' said Burke, 'want food that will stick to their ribs,' and the remark condenses in a phrase all that dissatisfaction with the theory and dream which is heard as an undertone in most of the authoritative criticism of Shelley. Like other revolutionary thinkers, Shelley hopes for the salvation and perfection of mankind by way of an absolute breach with the past. History is to him at best a black business, an orgy of fantastic and luxurious cruelty. He was a violent hater of the existing system of slavery, The multiplied oppression which is imposed on man by man himself, which has grown with its growth and is intertwined with his dearest interests is conceived of by the revolutionary theorists and, at least in his earlier poems, by Shelley himself, as a thing separable from man, a burden laid on him by some dark unknown power a net waved around him by tyrants. Shelley in the three or four years following Waterloo, issued a number of political poems, most of them inciting the English people to rise against slavery. In his poem 'Liberty' he observes :

"And tyrants and slaves  
Are like shadows of night  
In the van of the morning light."

Yes, the light of liberty affects one individual after another, one nation after another, passes from the city to the meanest village The light of dawn drives along



before it shadows of darkness. Once a people is inspired with the spirit of liberty, it shakes off all signs of slavery. One resolute insurrection, and the burden and bondage may be cast off for ever, the net severed at a blow, leaving man free, innocent and happy, the denizen of a golden world. No tyrant can any longer stay its course. Shelley's generous soul burned with rage at the spectacle of so much unhappiness all around him ; he would have welcomed a revolution, as we can see in his 'Men of England' :

"Men of England, wherefore plough  
For the lords who lay you low ?  
Wherefore weave with toil and care  
The rich robes your tyrants wear ?  
Wherefore, Bees of England, forge  
Many a weapon, chain and scourge,  
That these stingless drones may spoil  
The forced produce of your toil ?"

No exact political programme is deducible from his works. No coherent or satisfactory account can be given of the changes that would be necessary to bring in the idyllic society that mocks his vision in the distance. But if the aspirations of the poet are to be tethered to what is demonstrably attainable, the loftiest legitimate ambition ever breathed in English verse would perhaps be found in the political poems of Shelley. The creed of the revolution is a noble creed, and although Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, considered as the basis of a political system, have been sadly battered by political artillery, they have not yet been so com-

pletely disgraced that is forbidden to a poet to desire them. Only in a world where they shall be more desired than they are with us can they ever become possible. And the gist of Shelley's teachings lies not in this or that promise held out of future good, but in the means that he insists on for its realisation. The poet has achieved immortality, but not on his own terms. He is a beautiful and ineffectual angel—a decorator's angel, one might almost say, designed for a vacant space, not the authentic messenger of the will of Heaven. He was a moonlight visitant that soothes the soul with melodious words and beautiful images when the bonds of reality are loosened.

Shelley was the greatest exponent and messenger of the ideals of the French revolution. He was a firm believer in the greatness of human soul and creative power of the poets. His poems terribly influenced a large number of men including some great politicians of England. They, for the first time, began to question seriously the validity of slavery as a recognised institution. Though some great philanthropists headed by Wilberforce and Clarkson founded the Quaker Society in 1787 in England for the abolition of slave trade and emancipation of the slaves, and by dint of their ceaseless endeavours were able to abolish it from England in the year 1807, it remained as a very rigid and important social and political institution in all other parts of the British Empire including India. It was also in vogue in U.S.A. and South American states. Now Lord Brougham, Wilberforce, Lord Grey and other members of the Quaker

Society were profusely inspired by Shelley's noble ideals. They felt that God has created man after his own image. He is the master of the life and soul of man. And why a weak a man must be made to serve a strong man for his difference in race, caste, creed and colour ? Man is not the property of the states or of strong men. All men are equal and shall have every right to share in the state's affairs. And it is the state's duty to look after the general welfare of humanity as a whole. The inhuman and brutal tortures inflicted upon the Negro and Mullatto slaves by their white masters and the shameless breeding of Mullatto population by means of sexual intercourse between the European slave-owner and their Negro woman-slaves deeply moved their hearts. The public and hateful sale of beautiful Mullatto and Quadroon girls had acquired a notoriety in every nook and corner of England. So they started a movement in favour of the complete abolition of slavery from the British empire for ever. Lords Brougham and Grey took the initiative. They had to stand many obstacles in the way. The European cotton planters violently opposed their proposals and threatened to sever all ties with England.

But they were truly great and noble men with a noble ideal before them. And nothing could smother the earnestness of their zeal, tenacity of their purpose and bright luminosity of their soul. They successfully stamped out all the opposition that came in their way. They carried on their movement in the same spirit to a complete success. And at last in the year 1833 slavery



was completely abolished from the British Empire during the premiership of Lord Grey. The Parliament granted £ 20,000,000 to the slave owners as compensation who were now obliged to release their slaves. Thus a large number of slave population became free from bondage and were allowed to live like other freemen of the world.

So, also, from the British India, slavery was abolished. The slave owners had to release their slaves by gradual instalments. Lord Willam Cavendish Bentinck, the youngest son of the Duke of Portland, a former Prime Minister of England ( 1777 and 1802 ), was then the Governor-General of India. His name is associated with many important reforms in India in relation to social, economic and political problems. That noble Lord, according to the 1833 Act of Parliament, ordered the release of all the slaves in British India from their bondage. The European slave owners were given compensation, and they became obliged to set their slaves free.

The British Government deserves great admiration for taking very well organised and serious steps to completely wipe out slavery from each and every part of British-administered India, after the enactment of 1833 Act of Parliament.

The news, which appeared in the issue of 8th August, 1835 of Calcutta Gazette, throws a good deal of light on the attitude of the British Government to maintain very strictly the principles of law and enforce it properly.

It was alleged that on the 13th July, 1835, two Musal-  
mans, namely, Muhammed Amin Abdul Rahim and Pir  
Khan Haji, were arrested and presented before the  
Honourable Justice Sir John Audrey presiding over the  
special Jury in the Bombay High Court session, with the  
charge of dealing in slaves. It was alleged that  
Muhammed Amin Abdul Rahim sold two Negro slaves  
—one boy and the other girl—to Pir Khan Hazi, who  
bought them from him. The first accused Md. Rahim  
told the Court that he sold the Negroes to Hazi as he  
saw that Hazi had a Negro boy slave. He thought that  
the Negro girl could be used as the concubine of the  
Negro slave. Hazi, on the other hand, confessed the  
charges of the transactions and stated that he had very  
recently come from Iran, and he was a horse dealer  
there. In his country, he said, the slave trade is a  
legally recognised trade as the horse trade. He further-  
more stated that he was completely ignorant of English  
law, so he did not commit this crime deliberately.  
Two Arabian merchants gave evidence in the Court  
supporting the honesty, truthfulness and aristocracy of  
Hazi. Then Justice Sir John reviewed the pros and  
cons of the case and summed up the law points in-  
volved in the case. He held that the crime of the  
accused persons was proved, so his Lordship asked  
the gentlemen of the jury to return a proper and just  
judgement. The jury went to the adjoining Chamber  
and consulted each other and came back soon. They  
held both of them guilty of the charges of illegal trade  
in human flesh and blood. His Lordship having accepted

the unanimous verdict of the jury, sentenced the dealer Md. Abdul Amin to 7 years' Rigorous Imprisonment and sent him to Mauritius to serve the imprisonment there in exile, and the buyer Pir Hazi Khan to 3 years' R. I. at Harinbati. The slaves were ordered to be released by his lordship.

The editorial of Calcutta Gazette warned the slave owners, still in possession of slaves, to release them at once and never to deal in such an illegal trade, as there could not be any slave anywhere in the world, where the banner of Her Majesty's Government is hoisted.

But in India a systematic and properly well organised step for the emancipation of slaves was started in the year 1843, and slavery began to disappear from the country in the period after 1857, when railroad building supplied an outlet for labour.



## Chapter V

### Slave Labour in Indigo plantations and Tea gardens.

Though thousands of slaves were released from India, it remained in other forms in the country. The English tea and indigo planters and other industrialists found it very inconvenient to run their plantations and firms without slaves. So they adopted a new practice to retain this institution, but in another form. The poor peasants, villagers and some other persons were forcibly made to serve in their gardens. Though legally they were not slaves, yet their condition was not in any way better than slaves. They were also, like slaves, entertained by their European masters, with lashes, kicks and other brutal tortures. The woman labourers were openly used as the concubines of the European planters. The atmosphere, of these plantations were not in any way better than dungeons.

The atmosphere of indigo plantations and tea gardens was corrupt, loathsome, obnoxious and filled with many immoral practices and vices. This sort of condition lasted for a pretty long time, till the year 1860, when Raibahadur Dinabandhu Mittra published his epoch-making drama—Nildarpan—a drama which very beautifully reflects the severity and vices of the indigo planters and the horrible and pathetic conditions of the Indian peasants. In a word, the book is wonderful. It unfolded a new chapter on the cruelty

of European planters and landowners towards the poor Indian peasants and other population. The book was translated into English, it is belived, by Michael Madhusudan Dutta—a Barrister-at-Law, and the greatest Bengali poet and litterateur of the time. But curiously enough, it was published in the name of Reverend Long—a generous European clergyman of Calcutta. The effect of its English publication was tremendous upon the European society in India, particularly in Calcutta. It took the whole European community by storm. They were rudely shocked, terribly frightened and became wild with rage, because their wickedness was very clearly exposed in Nildarpan's English version. Some indigo planters felt themselves keenly insulted and resolved to deal with Rev. Long, upon whom all their rages were concentrated. So, with a view to punishing him, they filed a suit against Rev. Long, who was tried by a Presidency Magistrate of Calcutta and fined with one thousand rupees on charge of defamation etc. The fine was at once paid by Babu Kali Prasanna Sinha, a famous Zaminder, litterateur and Justice of Peace of Calcutta.

The Indigo-plantation was a monopoly of the Europeans throughout the nineteenth century. But the epochmaking book of Babu Dinabandhu Mitter dangerously exposed their vices, and the people of Bengal raised a hue and cry against the European Indigo-planters. The Indigo planters in India filled up their pockets by resorting to extortions and tortures to the poor people of the country. The English translation of

‘Nildarpan’ was warmly received in England, and it was so quickly and largely sold out that its first edition became exhausted very shortly. It created a sensation in every nook and corner of English society, and a very strong public opinion was formed in favour of taking necessary steps for the abolition of Indigo-plantations. So, the British Govt. had to submit to the public opinion. And they began to take necessary steps against the indigo-planters. They adopted different measures to abolish indigo-plantations and to stop their extortions, tortures and other illegal practices.

In Bengal, Sri Bankim Chandra Chatterjee—the preacher of “Bande Mataram” and author of “Ananda Math” did more than anybody else to ruin these pernicious mischief-mongers. He was at that time a first class Deputy Magistrate of Jessore and Khulna districts. He made it a point to bring the white indigo planters under complete control, because he wanted to see them law-abiding and gentle. So, he began to punish quite mercilessly the smallest infractions and breach of laws made by the indigo-planters. For reported cruelties and extortions, he arrested a large number of European planters, who were tried by him and sentenced to heavy fines as well as imprisonments. The European planters flew into a terrible rage and resolved to kill him. They kidnaped his orderly and awarded a reward of one lakh of rupees on his head. But Bankim Chandra was a man of undaunted spirit and a great patriot too. He was not in the least frightened, and he resolved to destroy their strongholds. Accordingly he raided on their estates,



arrested a large number of criminals and rescued his orderly. He punished some of the wicked and notorious rogues by inflicting exemplary punishments.

In the meantime Sri Harish Chandra Mookherji—a noted journalist of the time raised a hue and cry in his famous magazine—"The Hindu Patriot." He published a stream of fiery articles and worked day and night in giving practical advice and aid to the cultivators and their representatives who thronged at his doors. Two youngmen—Manomohan Ghosh and Sisir Kumar Ghosh, both destined to future fame, threw themselves into the agitation. The struggle raged in the countryside and the ranks of the people threw up their own leaders. The Wahabi Rafique Mandal, in North-Bengal, stood forth as the champion of the oppressed "fighting every battle to the bitter end." In Central Bengal, the Biswas brothers, Vishnu Charan and Digambar, resigned their posts under the planters and stood out as the leader of peasants, fighting law suits, at the same time organising resistance to the retainers of the planters on the spot.

The tyranny of the planters provoked a real mass upsurge amongst the cultivators which even the Royal Institute of Internal Affairs "has noted as a landmark in the history of nationalism." The Govt. had already announced that the indigo-plantation was to be on a voluntary basis. To assert their right of not growing indigo under the compulsion of the planters, the peasants in 1859 in hundreds of thousands spontaneously refused to produce indigo. In a river tour Sir John Peter Grant was appealed to by thousands of men and women, all

along his route, for protection against compulsory cultivation. But inspite of such mass upsurge and tireless efforts of Dinabandhu Mitter, Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Harish Chandra Mukherjee, Manomohan Ghosh, Sisir Kumar Ghosh and others, illegal beatings, detention and outrages became the order of the day. In the villages, the planters backed by the physical force of their own retainers, went on putting pressure on the helpless peasants. Even Government officials felt that the planters were going too far, but remonstrances and regulations proved equally unavailing. Harish Chandra Mukharjee was charged with defamation and even after his untimely death in 1861, the planters pursued his family in the courts to financial ruins. But all this turmoil had some effect. The Indigo Commission of 1860, could not avoid the public exposure of planters' rule in the countryside, the worst oppression upon human souls now began to fade out and gradually official restraint became more effective. But the greatest storm that totally broke down and killed the indigo cultivation was the production of synthetic dyes a generation later.

Most of the European officials, tradesmen and other inhabitants in India were generally men of very low and filthy stocks as well as questionable moral characters. They had little education. They were, moreover, arrogant by nature. They were the ruling class people. Hence, they would not consider Indian people as men. They filled up their pockets by resorting to extortions and tortures to the poor people of India, and

lived a very idle, carefree and luxurious life in this country.

Tea gardens, like indigo plantations, were the monopoly of the Europeans throughout the later twentieth century. It will be perhaps not inconsistent to reflect a picture on the life of tea gardens of India. Tea gardens were mostly situated in the North-Eastern part of India, i.e. North Bengal, including the districts of Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Tippera, Chittagong and the whole of Assam Valley. The labourers of these tea gardens were mostly recruited from the different parts of the country through the agents of the European managers, who were known as Arakati. Both men and women labourers were recruited to work in numerous tea gardens of the country. They were heavily guarded all along the routes on their way to the gardens by the Arakatis—the agents of the European managers. Once a man or woman came to such a tea garden, he or she was sure to be doomed there to eternal damnation, because the poor creature had no hope of release from the clutches of the European managers. As soon as a party of labourers came to a garden, they were persuaded to adopt many immoral practices. There were women, wine shops, opium and all other elements that could easily destroy the moral backbone of any man. The workers, who were generally known as “Koolis,” had to enter into a contract to serve there for a limited period, e.g. for about five to ten years. But they never could come out of the tea gardens and go back to their native villages. They had to spend their whole life in



bondage inside the gardens. They were treated exactly like cattle. The reasons were various. They were tempted to drink Taris ( fermented palm juice ) or a kind of wine, and squander away their earnings on women and gambling. So, whatever they earned was spent on these things. So they had no alternative than to take loans from the European managers for their means of subsistence. The Koolis were persuaded to take loans and advances from their European employers at a very high rate of interest. But they could not invariably pay back the money they had borrowed, because they were extravagant and their wages were very little. And whatever they drew as wages, was spent for their living, wine and women. So they had to enter into a fresh contract for another period of five to ten years to serve there as labourers. Thus, they were entrapped in tea-planters' nets and doomed for the whole life. They could never come out of the clutches of the hard-hearted planters, until and unless God smote them with death. They were mercilessly exploited and tortured by the native overseers and white managers. The wives and grown up daughters of the Koolis were the natural victims of the white managers, overseers and the Sirdars. They forcibly and openly used the Kooli-women as their concubines. Their fathers and husbands were quite helpless, and nothing but the silent spectators, and whoever dared to protest was tortured mercilessly. He was asked to pay back the loans advanced to him immediately, failing which he was very roughly handled. The European managers

were all rogues and rascals combined. They had very little education. They came of very low stocks, and were nothing but the riff-raffs and teddy boys in their own countries. Moreover, most of them were not married. That is why they never hesitated to live with the kooli women as man and wife. The poor women were forcibly enjoyed by them without their consent. The overseers also frequently raped and molested the women labourers of the tea-gardens. Above all, there were inhuman tortures and outrage upon the labourers. They had to work, all day long, like beasts, under the supervision of the overseers, who were nothing but inhuman monsters in the guise of men. They lashed, kicked and beat with fists the kools whenever they indulged in indolence or tried to take a little rest. The women koolis were also not spared the tortures. They were equally ill-treated with their male counterparts. Moreover, if any woman kooli refused to live with him as his kept woman, she was kept heavily guarded by him. And if she failed to pick up a sufficient quantity of tea-leaves, she had to fare a bad lot. She was excessively whipped and her back and shoulders were curved with long lines of wounds with blood oozing out from there. This sort of condition was also prevalent in the cotton plantations of the Southern states of U.S.A., where the slaves had to pick up a certain quantity of cotton in their baskets. And after the day's hard labour, each and every slave's collection was weighed by the overseers. Whoever failed to collect the average quantity was excessively whipped,

irrespective of the fact that the poor creature was a man or a woman. Mrs. H. B. Stowe in her immortal creation—"Uncle Tom's Cabin", very vividly describes this. In her book we get a very pathetic picture of the Negro slaves. So we can well imagine the horrible and pathetic conditions of the Koolis in the tea gardens in the latter part of the nineteenth and first three decades of the twentieth century.

The atmosphere of these tea-gardens were full of vices and immoral practices. Chastity of women, honesty, virtue of kindness were nothing but names. The poor creatures were doomed there for life. They had to endure all sorts of inhuman tortures quietly. They could not have recourse to any legal measures, because the European Magistrates always took the sides of their brethren. An interesting article was published in the weekly issue of "Desh,"—a leading Bengali weekly journal, which is sufficient for us to understand the miserable condition of the Koolis. An arrogant and licentious European manager was attracted by the beauty of a young Kooli-girl. He asked her to live with him to satisfy his ugly designs. But she readily refused it with profound repugnance and at once reported it to her father. He was a head-strong man and asked the white man to behave properly. The result was fatal for him. He was kicked in his abdomen and died consequently, and his daughter was molested and forcibly ravished. A case was filed against the culprit, but he was honourably acquitted by the European magistrate for the benefit of doubt. Moreover, the



magistrate passed severe strictures on the plaintiff and observed that such a heinous crime was not possible for a white man. So there was no remedy for such tortures, and the koolis had to tolerate all these inhuman acts of cruelty silently and helplessly.

If any kooli tried to fly away from the tea garden, the managers issued warrant against him, and advertisement was published in the various newspapers declaring rewards for his arrest. The police officials also did their very best to arrest him. So he was naturally detected and brought back to the the garden under the police custody. Nobody dared to give this poor fellow a shelter, as it was considered as an illegal act. He was beaten almost half-dead. So we can wel limagine the horrible condition of the tea-gardens.

But everything has a limit. Too much of anything, even of a good thing, is bad. The tyranny and wickedness of the white managers and their overseers became far too excessive day by day and went beyond limits. But even the patience of a saint has a limit. The koolis grew gradually restless and became united in every tea-garden to offer a stubborn resistance to the European managers and their overseers on a mass scale. They demanded some facilities so that they could live there like men, not like animals. They clashed with the managers and riots broke out in many tea-gardens in the first three decades of the twentieth century which resulted in the murder of many European managers. The koolis were also tortured, sentenced to long-term of imprisonment and even to transportation for life or

sentenced to death by the magistrates and judges. Many koolis were also shot dead by the managers. The British government, far from taking any step to stop the vandalism of the Tea-planters, fully encouraged them and helped them in every possible way. But truth cannot be suppressed. Truth will surely be out in time. The miserable conditions of the tea-gardens and the horrible sufferings of the koolis, the vices and immoral practices of the white-planters, were dangerously exposed by the Indian journalists and litterateurs. They published a series of fiery articles in the different newspapers and journals, and raised a hue and cry against the tyranny and cruelty of the European tea-planters.

They also sent many deputations to the Viceroys and Governors requesting them to properly deal with the matter. The koolies, in the meantime, carried on a well-organised movement to stop the tortures, exploitations, extortions and inhuman acts of cruelty inflicted upon them. Moreover, they tried to achieve their freedom to go back to their native villages wherefrom they were taken away. They also claimed the right to form their Unions and many other facilities as well. Their demand became so very persistent in the course of the movement that both the government and tea-planters had to submit to their will and grant them some facilities. They had to build up cottages for the labourers and appoint doctors to attend to the sick-koolis. Moreover, they were granted some holidays, which they were so long devoid of. The planters were obliged to increase the wages of the labourers to some extent

and their status was also raised to a little higher degree.

The white managers realised it very well that the days of their tyranny were over. So they had recourse to new tactics to tackle the labourers in their respective tea-gardens. They rather took a friendly attitude to the koolis. Dr. Muluk Raj Anand's "Kooli" and "Two Leaves and a Bud" vividly describes the miserable condition of the koolis and vice prevalent in the tea-gardens. Jarasandha's immortal book—"Lauha Kapat" also throws a good deal of light on the vices, degradation and immoral condition in the tea-gardens in those days.

The phrase that "pen is mightier than the sword" is true at least so far as the case of the manumission of the slaves and other depressed classes of men are concerned, because it was the artists and litterateurs who did more than anybody else to secure the freedom and liberty of the depressed class of men in all countries, in all times and for all ages.

The conquerors dazzle across the pages of history and swashbuckling is a diverting pasttime. We, therefore, very often appreciate the achievements of great soldiers like Alexander, Timurlong, Julius Ceasar, Hannibal, and Napoleon. But there is no denying the fact that the human civilization is built up by the poets, writers, philosophers and litterateurs. Man's primal instinct is the instinct of the beast. And man has continually sought to conquer that instinct by superior mental culture. The pen of the intellectuals is the sym-



bol of men's intellectual development. If the French revolution was brought by the soldiers and politicians, the inspiration certainly came from Voltaire, Rousseau and other writers. If Soviet Russia is moving today from glory to glory, behind it lies the inspiration of Karl Marx. Thus literature represents the noblest creative efforts of men. It is the medium through which man always seeks to remedy social ills. The literary artists, political writers and philosophers have ceaselessly fought, from the early dawn of human civilisation, to drive away social evils, corruption, degradation and other inherent wicked traits of human character. They have taken infinite pains to materialise their ideals. If man enjoys equality, liberty and fraternity today in certain portions of the globe, it is due obviously to the master writers of the world, who have tried to achieve this freedom and salvation of mankind more than anybody else. Slavery, forced labour and other kinds of oppression on man have been and are still being decried by the writers, not by the politicians or others. Longfellow has truly sung :—

“God sent his singers upon the earth,  
 With songs of sadness and of mirth,  
 That they might touch the hearts of men,  
 And bring them back to heaven again.”

## Chapter VI

Indian Slave labour in South-Africa, West Indies  
other South-East and Asian countries.

The dawn of the nineteenth century found India prostrate—in a state of political, social and economic decay. The Bharat Varsha of the Vedic ideals which Asoka wanted to materialise, failed to achieve its end. The great culture, history, tradition and religion of the Hindus lay buried in the womb of the past. With uncanny insight Karl Marx wrote :—

“All the civil wars, invasions, revolutions and conquests in Hindusthan did not go deeper than its surface. England had broken down the entire framework of Indian society without any symptoms of reconstitution yet appearing. The loss of his old world with no gain of a new one imparts a particular kind of melancholy to the present misery of the Hindus and separates Hindusthan ruled by Britain from its ancient traditions and from the whole of its past history.”

The songs of Bharati and Tagore had yet to be sung, Raja Ram Mohan Ray, ‘father of Indian secularism’, had just made his appearance on the horizon and was initiating a revolution in the doddering fabric of Hindu society. Sati had been abolished. Through the window of the West new learning was entering the country. Yet the Stewarts, the Maxmullers, Havel and Metcalfes had still to discover the greatness of India from under

the debris of ages. Though new learning was entering the country through the window of the West, India had still to learn many things.

But further away in Europe, the West was finding its destiny. By cultural unity achieved through Christianity, aided by the progress of science, supported by the activities of their adventurers, Europe was marching towards the apex of her greatness and glory.

World conscience, I have already said, was shaken by the depredations of slave traffickers. In almost a century, twelve million human beings had been up-rooted. It left a trail of misery and suffering besides blood and tears in Africa. The new pattern of society that was sought to be created in the West-Indies, Southern states of the American continent, Mauritius, Madagascar, Fiji and elsewhere, failed to materialise. The onslaught of liberalism represented by Fox, Burke, Richard Brinseley, Sheridan and others received the baptism of civil war, thus disburdening the human conscience and sounding the death knell of slavery. It was one thing to abolish slavery and it was another to remove it from the ramparts of civilization. Business had still to go on. The black-man's crops like cotton, cocoa, tea and coffee had still to be grown. The diamond mines in South-Africa, the Tin Mines in Malaya, the tea gardens in Ceylon had still to be kept productive and it required labour. Understandably the erstwhile slaves, after the Act of 1833, refused to work for their masters, and therefore, new sources of labour had to be tapped.

Slavery was officially abolished by law from India, but



the indigo plantations and tea-gardens were filled with koolis or the slave-labourers. We have tried to portray their miserable condition in the previous chapters. The Europeans did not remain content with such merciless exploitation of Indian people in India, they also began to export large number of Indian labourers of both sexes in the different parts of the British Empire. Indian koolis were recruited in the same way I have already discussed, and sent to South Africa, Mauritius, Fizi, Jamaica, Bahama, West-Indies, Malaya, Ceylon and East Indies.

When the Chinese and Malayan labour failed to fill the bill, a great untapped reservoir of cheap labour was found in India.

Shackled and trampled, a helpless country could not safeguard the rights of her sons and daughters who were taken away from her shores to work in alien lands like cattle as indentured labourers, a pernicious system which amounted to slavery. Even though they proved ambassadors of Indian culture and kept the flag of India flying wherever they went, the underlying idea of taking them away from India was not that. In foreign countries, they had to withstand intolerable and unthinkable tortures. They were subjected to great humiliation and extracted the last farthing by their heart-hearted employers. They were treated exactly like slaves, and according to a great British historian it is hardly possible to distinguish these labourers from slaves. In my humble opinion, it is next to impossible to draw a line of demarcation between these Indian koolis and the

Negro slaves. They were up rooted from their homes and mixed and jumbled into such a chaotic web that it is difficult to decipher the origin, lineage of the groups and tribes to which they belonged.

The Indian koolis were exported to Natal, Transval, Kenya and some other parts of South Africa in large number. They were also exported in thousands to Fizi islands, Jamaica, Bahama, British Guina and some other parts of South-East Asian countries to serve in the place of the Negro slaves. They had to enter into a contract here in India with their European masters, to serve in the gold, diamond and other mines in Africa and other plantations in the countries of the West Indies and South-Africa for a stipulated period. But it is needless to say, they could never come out of the clutches of their employers. They were doomed there in the far away countries for their whole life. They were known as slave-labourers. Their blood has besmeared the history of Western civilization with dark spots which cannot be brushed aside in any way.

In South Africa these Indian slave labourers were engaged in the gold and diamond mines. The atmosphere of these mines were quite filthy and loathsome. And the koolis had to spend their days in nightmare. They were always treated with great cruelty and they had to withstand unthinkable tortures. They were whipped and beaten and grossly exploited exactly like the slaves by the taskmasters and overseers. Their wives and daughters were forcibly ravished by the overseers and managers. Moreover, they were devoid of any education

or enlightenment. So they became mentally dejected and morally degraded very soon.

The kooli-barracks, where the koolis resided, were exactly like hell-holes. The atmosphere of these barracks was filthy, loathsome and obnoxious due to the lack of proper sanitation and planning facilities. Moreover, the koolis, who were recruited from India, were mostly villagers and illiterate. They did not have any education. So they became morally very degraded. The number of male labourers were much higher than that of their female counterparts, the ratio being 60% to 40%.

Moreover, there was no separate accommodation for the women labourers. In the kooli barracks, the male and female koolis had to stay and spend the night in the same room. The women labourers had to change their dress there before the presence of the men. There was no separate toilet for them. So they had no opportunity to maintain their privacy and decency. So corruption, degradation, degeneration and immoral practices pervaded the whole atmosphere of the places where the Indian koolis lived. Their morality reached a bottom wherefrom recovery seemed well-nigh impossible. There was no opportunity for the women to remain chaste and live a pure and honourable life. Moreover, they had to satisfy the lust of many persons. They had to fare a very bad lot if they declined to satisfy the ugly designs of the European overseers and managers. Their relatives were nothing but the helpless and silent spectators.



We can, therefore, very distinctly visualise the miserable condition of the slave-labourers, who were deported from their native land. The koolis could not redress their grievances in any way. And they had to tolerate all the brutal tortures extended to them quite helplessly. There was no leader among them, nor could they get any sympathy from any European person. So there was no way out. Many koolis committed suicide to get rid of this unthinkable torture. They preferred death to enduring such humiliation. The percentage of suicide among the Indian koolis was by far the highest in Fizi island.

The government of South Africa did not remain content with this mere exploitation of the Indian koolis. They were afraid of the growing influx of Indian population. And, therefore, they wanted to thoroughly extirpate the Indians. So a draft ordinance was published in the Transvaal Gazette Extraordinary of 22nd August 1906. It meant the ruin for the Indians in South Africa.

Under it, every Indian, man, woman or child of eight years or upwards, entitled to reside in the Transvaal, had to register his or her name with the Registrar of Asiatics and take out a certificate of registration.

The applicants for registration had to surrender their old permit to the Registrar, and state in their applications their names, residence, caste, age, etc. The Registrar was to note down important marks of identification upon the applicant's person, and take his finger and thumb-impression. Every Indian who failed

thus to apply for registration before a certain date was to forfeit his right of residence in the Transvaal. Failure to apply would be held to be an offence in law for which the defaulter could be fined, sent to prison or even deported within the discretion of the court.

The Indian koolis and other residents became horrified to learn about it. They were quite helpless now. They were about to be ruined and destroyed.

But at this time came a god-sent messenger to rescue them from this imminent danger. He was no other than Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi—a young Barrister-at-law—who later on became known as Mahatma Gandhi—the father of Indian nation, the saviour of 400 million people from the yoke of slavery—the greatest man of the world in his time.

Mohandas Karam Chand Gandhi was born in Porbandar of Kathiawabad region on the 2nd October, 1869 and assassinated in New Delhi by Nathuram V. Godsay on the 30th January, 1948. Son of Kaba Gandhi—the Prime Minister of Rajkot, Mohandas was called to the Bar in 1891. He started his practice in South Africa, and soon became one of the most leading lawyers there. He earned the estimation of the people, both Indian and European, by the greatness of his soul, warmth of his heart and charm of his personality. He served the distressed persons in the Zulu war and earned a distinction for which he was decorated with the Kaizer-I-Hind medal by the British Government. Soon after the war, he learnt about the distress of the people and

the Black Act, and became rudely shocked, greatly moved and deeply pained.

So he came forward to stand by the side of his beloved countrymen who were already subjected to great humiliation and now on the verge of utter destruction.

He held many meetings and explained to the Indian people of the imminent danger that was coming to them. So he roused the Indian koolis and other Indian people from their deathlike sleep. Therefore, he started a movement in favour of the withdrawal of the Act. He also carried on negotiations with Field Marshal Smutt—the then Prime Minister of the country. But the Field Marshal did little to redress the grievances of the Indians nor did he agree to repeal the Act. On the other hand, the Govt. arrested many Indians and sentenced them to heavy imprisonment and fines. Even Gandhi was placed under arrest and sentenced to imprisonment.

But the government failed to reap any advantage from this. On the other hand, they observed the spirit of the Indian community rising higher.

The Indians, led by M. K. Gandhi, carried on their movement. This movement, described as 'passive resistance', soon came to be known as 'Satyagraha.'

The women also did not lag behind in their struggle against the arbitrary attitude of the South African Government. They threw themselves up to the movement with unflinching zeal, when the govt. declined to repeal the notorious 'Black Act' in 1913, and abolish the £3 tax levied upon the Indians.



So far, although they had often been eager to follow their husbands to jail, women had been dissuaded from courting imprisonment but as though to strengthen their case, the South African Government chose this time to enforce a judgment which nullified all marriages that had not been celebrated according to Christian rites or registered by the Registrar of Marriages. Thus at a stroke all marriages celebrated according to the Hindu, Mussalman and Zoroastrian rites were made illegal and practically all the Indian women in South Africa ceased to be their husbands' legal wives. The Indian women became utterly restless and decided to offer stubborn satyagrah irrespective of the number of fighters, as patience was impossible in the face of this insult.

By this time, Gandhiji began to form a strong public opinion against the aggressive policy of the government by delivering fiery speeches in the meetings held in different places.

In the meantime, Gopal Krishna Gokhale paid a visit to South-Africa to act as mediator between the satyagrahis and the government. After he had seen General Botha, he encouraged Gandhiji and others to believe that all would be well. "Next year," he said, "The Black Act would be repealed and the £3 tax be abolished."

But nothing of the sort happened. So the Indians had no other alternative than to carry on the satyagraha on a mass scale. The Indian women also came in large number and joined the movement. The South African government tried to suppress the movement by throwing the leaders as well as the volunteers into jail in a

arge number. Kosturiba, the wife of Gandhiji, and many other Indian women courted arrest. Their bravery was beyond words. They were all kept in Maritzburg jail, where they were considerably harassed. Their food was of the worst type and they were given heavy laundry work as their task. No food was permitted to be given from outside till nearly the end of their term.

Mrs. Gandhi was under a religious vow to restrict herself to a particular diet. After great difficulties the jail authorities allowed her that diet but the articles supplied were unfit for human consumption. When she was released, she was a mere skeleton and her life was saved only by a great effort. And Valliamma R. Muniswami Mudaliar, a young girl of eighteen, returned from jail with a fatal fever to which she succumbed within a few days of her release ( 22nd February, 1914 ).

It was, therefore, an abosolutely pure sacrifice that was offered by the Indian sisters. Sacrifice is fruitful only to the extent that it is pure. God hungers after devotion in man. He is glad to accept prayer with devotion, without a self-motive, and rewards it hundredfold. The imprisonment of many might have been fruitless, but the devoted sacrifice of a single pure soul could never go in vain. None can tell what other sacrifice in South Africa was acceptable to God. But we do know that Valliamma's sacrifice was.

Souls without number spent themselves in the past, are spending themselves in the present and will spend themselves in the future in the service of the country

and humanity, and that is in the fitness of things, as no one knows who is pure. But the sacrifice of a single pure soul is enough to achieve one's end.

The women's imprisonment and their sacrifice worked like a charm upon the labourers in the mines near Newcastle who downed their tools and joined the satyagraha movement in batches. They courted arrest in batches and were brutally manhandled in the jail. The Government, furthermore, had surrounded the mines with fences, declaring them outstations of the Dundee and Newcastle prisons, and put the miners back to work in them. This virtual slavery roused a storm of indignation in India, largely owing to the efforts which Gopal Krishna Gokhale made, although he was very ill.

In India, Gokhale, Pandit Madan Mohan Malavya, Rabindra Nath Tagore and others raised a hue and cry against this oppression.

Mr. C. F. Andrews—a great educationist, philanthropist and disciple of Poet Rabindra Nath Tagore was deeply moved to read the official account of the condition of Indian koolis in the Fizi island. The record of suicide among the Indian koolis rudely shocked him. He felt an irresistible urge from Lord Christ to go to Fizi to witness the condition of the Indian slave-labourers. When he expressed his desire to the poet, Rabindra Nath heartily reciprocated him and blessed him.

Mr. Andrews reached Fizi island in 1915, accompanied by Mr. L. Pearson—another friend of India and a disciple of the poet. Mr. Andrews became horrified to witness the pathetic condition of the Indian labourers.



The shameful and pathetic condition of the Indian women melted his heart. He extensively travelled the different places and noted down the condition and grievances of the koolis with many individual references.

Having returned to India, Mr. Andrews submitted his report to the Viceroy, Baron Hardinge of Penshurst. Lord Hardinge was already acquainted with this malpractice of the European planters and the pathetic condition of the labourers. Lord Hardinge made his famous speech in December, 1913. It was not usual for the Viceroy to criticise publicly the administration in other parts of the empire. But at the behest of Gokhale Lord Hardinge not only passed severe strictures on the Union Government of South Africa, but also wholeheartedly defended the action of the satyagrahis. Lord Hordinge's firmness created a profound impression all around. A commission of inquiry was appointed, and although no Indians were among its members, yet shortly after the issue of the commission's report, the government published in the Official Gazette of the Union the Indians' Relief Bill which was to effect the long-delayed settlement. It abolished the £3 tax, made legal in Africa all marriages that would be deemed legal in India, and made a domicile certificate bearing the holder's thumb print sufficient evidence of the right to enter the Union.

The British Government also took steps against the system by passing an Act in 1915. The reports submitted by Mr. Andrews made possible the abolition of this contracted slave labour. The materials gathered by Mr. Andrews were so vivid and pathetic

that Lord Hardinge did not hesitate to contact the Secretary of State for India and urge him to abolish this hateful system immediately. He did his very best to enact the law as soon as possible. But ultimately a clause was inserted to the Act at the behest of the Colonial Department of the British Government which gave the European planters an opportunity to retain the institution for five more years, and to rejuvenate the institution in another form. This cunning deceit on the part of the Colonial Department stood as a great obstacle. The condition of the Indian slave-labourers did not change at all. So Mr. Andrews and others had to start their movement and their heroic struggle again to totally wipe out the institution. Mr. Andrews left for Fizi Island again. At this time he was greatly encouraged and patronised by the poet Rabindra Nath Tagore.

Paying his glowing tribute and reverent homage to the poet, Mr. Andrews says that his love and affection and encouragement enabled and emboldened him to go to Fizi and carried on his movement against this hateful system. The letters which Dr. Tagore used to write to Mr. Andrews from Shantiniketan, inspired him profusely.

Mr. Andrews collected huge materials of the sufferings of the Indian women labourers and gave vivid descriptions of their pathetic condition in the different cities and places of Australia. In many women conferences, he described the sorrows and distresses of the Indian women. He explained to them how the Indian women were being grossly exploited in

the different plantations in the island and what a shameless and nasty life they had to live there amidst nightmare.

The condition of Indian labourers, he held, was far more pathetic than their South African counterparts.

The Australian women first of all could not believe him, because they could not even dream of such horrible things. So they sent Mrs. Granham to Fizi island as their representative to study the situation independently and submit her report. Accordingly she went to Fizi and thoroughly studied the situation there. The report which she submitted on returning to Australia, was more vehement than those of Mr. Andrews. The Australian women became horrified with the report of Mrs. Granham. They, for the first time, became convinced of the miserable condition of the Indian slave labourers and the Indian women. They raised a hue and cry and started a movement to stop the recruitment of labourers and their export to the different countries at once. Miss Priest and Miss Dixon, two other Australian ladies who were the members of the theosophical society, at once left for Fizi island. And they travelled widely in the different plantations and freely mixed up with the Indian women-labourers. They sacrificed their life there for the general welfare of the Indian women-labourers.

In India the movement against this hateful system became very prominent day by day. The leading Indian personalities carried on their movement for the abolition of this hateful practice. The Indian women also



did not lag behind. A party of Indian ladies led by Mrs. Jayji Petit met the Governor-General. The Governor-General promised them to take all possible measures to do away with this contracted slave labour and stop the export of Indian people to these far away countries as soon as possible.

At last on the 1st January, 1920, this hateful system was totally abolished by an Act of Parliament. The Indian men and women—who were held in bondage as slave-labourers got their freedom on that day, which is still celebrated as the day of liberation. It is also a red-letter day in the history of India, for thousands of her children became free from slavery on that day.

Though this hateful system has long been abolished, yet our task has not yet been complete. We have still to do a lot for our millions of brothers and sisters who are lying scattered about in the different parts of the British Commonwealth. Today they are a great problem with us, especially the Indians of South Africa. They are still subjected to great humiliation due to Government policy of racial discrimination or colour bar.

There are about five million people of Indian origin domiciled all over the world. Indian Ocean Region accounts for : Burma 700,000 , Ceylon 8,29,619 ; Mauritius 3,75,918, South Africa 2,50,000 ; Pacific Region—Fiji 1,69,493 : Australia and Newzealand about 5000 ; Carbean Region-Trinidad 2,67,000 ; British Guiana 2,10,000 Jamaica 26,000. Dutch Guiana 70,000 and smaller number in other territories.

In over a century starting from 1842, when the first

batch of Indians were taken away by the French, over a million people were taken away to different parts of the world. They were small peasants living in comparative poverty because of unsettled condition. The impact of the Western culture, social and economic institutions upon India was devastating indeed. Everything Indian was considered lower and was looked down upon.

Today, technically speaking, they are not Indians. There are two schools of thought in India today. One feels that they must be left to fend for themselves and the other feels that it is the duty of India to look after her sons and daughters wherever they may be. I feel that if a Chinese can remain a Chinese, a Jew can remain a Jew in whatever part of the world they may be, why cannot an Indian remain an Indian. Wherever he goes, he carries a bit of India with him. His cultural background, his social institutions, his economic training, his religious beliefs do make it a little difficult for him to merge and be assimilated into different groups. He has been considered alien and unassimilable.

With the freedom of India, their status has improved, but not to the extent it should have. No Government, howsoever powerful it may be, can or would like to tell other States as to how to treat a part of their own population. The problems of Indians overseas are threefold. Socially they are discriminated. The doors of hotels, cinemas are barred and bolted against them. Schools do not admit their children ; wherever they go their mother tongue is ignored.

Culturally they are considered outcasts. Their

system of marriage, customs and tradition are not recognised in the West Indies and other areas. Economically they are not allowed to follow the professions they would like to pursue. They cannot buy land even today in British Guiana and Fizi. So that they will remain a cheap supply of labour, restrictions are imposed upon their settlement on land. These and other problems still exist.

It is not easy to codify them because they differ in different areas. However, the fact remains that they do not get any impetus or encouragement from local authorities and are at best even today tolerated. There is no doubt that only a very microscopic minority of them have done well. The others continue to live on a subsistence level. The question of Indians in South Africa at the United Nations is a pointer in that direction. There is no doubt that we can do quite a bit for our brethren domiciled abroad. Politically, they must fight their battles in their adopted homelands. And the government of India should help them socially and culturally. In fact, they have forgotten their mother tongues and great cultural heritage. The Indian women have given up the habit of putting on Sarees. Even they put on Gowns and other Western dress. This thing badly affects our aesthetic tastes. We should, therefore, send Indian missionaries and other representatives to awake them from their death-like sleep and remind them once more of the golden heritage of Indian culture which is now in the danger of being forgotten.



And whatever India may, or may not do for her sons and daughters domiciled abroad, they must realise that their destiny is inevitably woven with the land and people among whom they are living. In keeping with the spirit of the times, their roots must go deep in the soil of those lands that have prospered by their sweat and blood.

They can be sure of at least one thing, that their beloved motherland, the land of their ancestors, will always stand by them in their Cultural, Social and Economic needs.

## Chapter VII

Abraham Lincoln—the liberator of Negro slaves.

“Whoever is too great must lonely live,  
Adored he walks in mighty solitude,  
Vain are his efforts to create his kins,  
And his only comrade is the strength within.”

—Sri Aurobindo.

Once in a thousand years comes a man through whom the soul of an entire nation expresses itself. Such were Lord Budha and Maharshi Asoska in ancient India, such was Jesus Christ in Christendom, Gouranga in Bengal, Karl Marx in Europe, Rousseau and Voltaire in France. And such was Abraham Lincoln in the United States of America. He is undoubtedly the greatest symbol of the civilization of the United States of America. If George Washington is responsible for the independence of America, Lincoln is certainly responsible for the rebirth of U.S.A., for the salvation of thousands of human souls. He is responsible for the emancipation of the Negro slaves. The history of slavery and its manumission will remain incomplete, if we fail to relate the miserable fate of the Negro slaves and their liberator Abraham Lincoln, who procured their liberty at the cost of his life.

Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), the sixteenth President of the United States of America, was born in a log cabin

and was endowed by his frontier life with self reliance, courage and compassion. Primarily self-taught, he became a successful and well-known lawyer. Early in his career, he developed a hatred for slavery.

Slavery, though it was abolished and banned from the whole region of the British Empire, was still in vogue in U.S.A., Mexico and in all the South American states. In the American countries the system, far from being abolished, was rapidly developing as a very important institution. The rapid opening of Western cotton belt after 1815 created a great regional demand for plantation labour. It was not until the eighteenth century when plantation had spread into many areas, that the Atlantic slave trade became the most profitable branch of maritime activity. The Portuguese, French and other European slave traders still carried on this trade in full swing with the South American States and U.S.A. They used to capture the Negroes mainly from the Western coasts of Africa by raiding the villages of the Negroes. The local chieftains also dealt in slaves. They frequently quarrelled and clashed with each other. They sold out their captives as slaves to the European slave merchants at a very cheap price. The Portuguese and Arabs were the main dealers in slave trade in Africa right from the fourteenth century down to the later phase of the nineteenth century. The slave hunters brought thousands of slaves from the densest part of Africa to the western shores. The routes were long and tiresome. The slaves were all heavily guarded by the Arab and European slave dealers, who were well-equipped with



guns and other arms and ammunitions. The Negroes were all hand-cuffed and chained with each other. Heavy pieces of wooden bars were also tied to their necks and shoulders so that they could not fly away. Their mouths were shut up with a kind of belt made of the skin of the cows and other animals.

They were all brutally treated all along the route until and unless they reached the sea shores. They had to walk all day long ceaselessly and whoever felt tired and tried to take a little rest was horse whipped. Many of these poor creatures died on the way. Sometimes it took about three months for the party to reach the sea-shore. Those who reached the sea-shore became already half dead.

The slaves were most inhumanly treated as soon as they reached the sea-shores. They were all converted into Christianity by the clergymen who would wait there for the purpose. Then they were most barbarously treated by the white men of the same faith. They were all fastened with chains and fetters and forcibly pushed and brought on to the decks of the ships for the purpose of being exported to the South as well as North American countries. The space in a ship was not enough for the accommodation of slaves, because in a small ship about five hundred to one thousand Negroes were loaded. The ships were usually two-storeyed. There were two to three decks in a ship. The Negroes were forcibly pushed into the lower and upper decks. Each and every male slave was fettered and fastened with long chains from ankle to ankle with

each other. Women slaves were also chained but not from ankle to ankle. The men and women slaves were kept in separate decks. The decks were not spacious or commodious. But the number of the slaves kept confined there was very large. So they had to fare a very bad journey. All the slaves had to lie down upon the floors of the deck with their ankles fastened with chain with each other and they could not move even an inch on any side. The decks were as tightly packed up with 'human cargoes' as melons are with seeds. So we can well imagine the horrible condition of the hundred thousand of the Negro slaves who were forcibly taken away from their happy hamlets to distant parts of foreign lands for ever for the purpose of being doomed to damnation. Many of the Negroes preferred to commit suicide to enduring such an unthinkable torture and great acts of inhumanity done to them. So they refused to take any food. But they were forced to eat. All the slaves were forcibly compelled to dance on the upper deck every day in the evening so that they were not disheartened. At this time many slaves jumped down into the sea and embraced death in preference to this horrible torture. The typical voyage of the slave traders was triangular.

The ships carrying thousands of such Negro-slaves reached the different ports of U.S.A., Mexico, Peru, Colombia, Brazil, Venejuela, Argentina and Chile from Africa after a few months. The local agents of the internal slave merchants awaited there. The slaves were all distributed to them. But the slaves had to bear

inhuman tortures before they were despatched to the agents of the slave traders in these ports. The male slaves were made to stand in rows on the decks of the ships. They were all able-bodied men and supposed to work very hard in the cotton plantations, coffee gardens and other estates of the European colonists. Each and every Negro male slave had to stand the kicks of race horses calmly and quietly. A single kick of such a horse was enough for an ordinary white man to throw him off at least about 20 to 25 feet with his bones smashed into pieces. But the Negroes had to tolerate this calmly and who could resist such kicks without being thrown off, was sold out for heavy price, because he was considered to be a man of strong health. Then all the Negroes, irrespective of men and women, were branded in their foreheads, breasts and legs with very hot and burning iron sticks. This was a sign - too deep to be erased out during one's lifetime - as a mark of slavery. This hateful and barbarous practice was invented by the Portuguese slave traders so that the slaves could not fly away. Then the slaves were presented to their new masters and their interpreters made them understand what would be their duties to their masters. The Negro slaves were usually very inhumanly treated by their white masters. Their condition was not in any way better than the Roman or Greek slaves who used to work in the copper mines and died prematurely, within three or four years of their enslavement. The Negroes had to work very hard in their master's plantations. The condition of the Negro slaves working in



the cotton and other plantations was horrible and much inferior even to Greek, Oriental and Barbarian slaves who were enslaved by the Romans in the second century B C, and doomed in the Delian slave markets. The life of a slave serving in a bronze or copper mine in ancient times would be ended within a period of three to four years after his entrance into such a mine. Here in American plantations also, the same thing happened. The Negro slaves had to work very hard from the early morning down to late evening. They were all under the supervision of overseers. These overseers were very hard hearted men, who supervised the works of the slaves without any mercy at all. If they found any slave taking a little rest being very much fatigued and tired, they at once whipped him excessively until and unless blood ran through his body.

The women slaves were also not spared the tortures. After the day's hard work they returned to their cottages and prepared their food late at night. Some were so tired that they could not prepare their food and fell asleep. Thus, the most able-bodied and healthy Negro slaves also died within a few years. Many slaves tried to fly away from the plantations. But it was next to impossible to do so. The places were well protected and heavily guarded by watchmen and blood hounds and bull dogs. Many slaves were shot dead by the guards and many slaves' bodies were torn into pieces and eaten up by the dogs. Run-away slaves, if captured, were brought back and beaten almost half dead. The planters and other slave owners maintained a party

of men whose only profession was to find out the run-away slaves and bring them back to their masters, either alive or dead.

The condition of the household slaves was better than that of the aforesaid slaves. Here the slaves performed all sorts of hard and menial works. The women slaves would work as the attendants of the housewives. The laws were very harsh and gave all facilities to the masters. There were whipping house posts to deal with the disobedient and run-away slaves. The masters were the sole lords of the life and death of their slaves. They could inflict corporal or any sort of punishment they liked. The condition of the Negro slaves was very pathetic in U.S.A. and other South American states. The slaves were considered inferior to animals. They could be sold, mortgaged, leased or utilised in all other ways according to the sweet will of their white masters. According to laws, they were legal objects and properties, not human beings. The children of the Negro slaves were always the natural slaves of their masters.

We do not want to go into greater detail to describe the miserable condition of the Negro slaves, because it is too pathetic a story to relate. Anyway, the system was prevalent in all the American states except Canada and British territories in America, wherefrom the system was totally abolished and banned according to the 1833 Act of Parliament.

The condition of the Negroes became all the more worse when the English as well as the French government began to take a proper and well organised step

to prohibit the export of shiploads of Negro slaves to the different parts of the Western hemisphere. The British Government took the most well organised step to stop this illegal trade. The English ships kept very heavy guard on all the ships bound for American countries from the different parts of Africa. They searched the ships to see whether they were carrying on Negro slaves. The result was very fatal for the Negro slaves. The slave traders threw off the Negro slaves, with their hands and legs tightly chained, into the seas when the English patrol ships challenged them and wanted to search their ships. The life of the Negroes proved to be less valuable than even pieces of stones, because they fell from the frying-pan into the burning fire. Dr. Livingstone and Mr. Stanley were two great English tourists, who extensively visited Africa with the object of discovering many unknown regions of the vast unknown continent risking their lives. Dr. Livingstone was a great philanthropist too. He travelled in the densest jungles of Africa infested with wild beasts and other ferocious animals and cannibals as well. He left very interesting accounts of his journey and we come to know from his everyday diary that the Arab and other slave traders had not the least care for the cruelty of this trade. He states to have seen one evening that the Arab merchants shot about four hundred Negro slaves to death for nothing. They were surplus goods in the budget and this was their only fault.

The worst feature of slavery in American countries was the use of Negro women slaves as the concubines of



their white masters. Everywhere mingling of blood between slave women and white masters was common. The children took the unfair status of the mother, but in some cases manumitted by the father. The offsprings of this intercourse looked very much like white men and came to be known as Mulattos. They, especially the Mulatto and Quadroon girls, were in great demand in all the slave markets of U.S.A. So the breeding of Mulatto population on a large scale began everywhere in all the American countries, especially in U.S.A. The public and shameless sale of beautiful Mulatto and Quadroon girls acquired a notoriety from the incidents following the capture of the *Pearl*. We extract the following from the speech of the Hon. Horace Mann, one of the legal counsels for the defendant in the case. He says :—"In that company of seventy-six persons, who attempted in 1848 to escape from the district of Colombia in the Schooner *Pearl* and whose officers—I assisted in defending, there were several young and healthy girls who had those peculiar attractions of form and feature which connoisseurs prize so highly. Elizabeth Russel was one of them. She immediately fell into the slave traders' fangs and was doomed for the New Orleans Market. The hearts of those that saw her were touched with pity for her fate. They offered eighteen hundred dollars to redeem her and some there were who offered to give that would not have much left after the gift ; but the fiend of a slave trader was inexorable. She was dispatched to New Orleans, but when about half way there, God had mercy on her and smote her with death."

Slavery with all its evil features would have remained in U.S.A., and in many other states, if Abraham Lincoln were not born and if Mrs. H. B. Stowe would not have published "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

A self-made man of profound learning and deep insight, Abraham Lincoln was a philanthropist who developed a hatred for slavery when he first saw the hateful and public sale of a beautiful Mulatto slave girl at his young age. As time went on this hatred became more and more passionate and compact and he made it a point to abolish slavery from U.S.A. at any cost. He became a very famous man when he first strongly argued with Douglass - a democratic Senator who was in favour of retaining slavery as a recognised institution.

The year 1860 was an important landmark in Lincoln's life and career. The Presidential election scheduled for that year witnessed intense bitterness between the Northern states who demanded abolition of slavery and the Southern states who insisted on its retention. Lincoln was elected the sixteenth President of the United States and shortly afterwards, seven Southern states withdrew from the Union and formed a confederacy of their own, followed subsequently by four other states. They did it in defiance of his determination to free the slaves.

Lincoln had a deep and profound love for humanity as a whole. He had developed a keen hatred for slavery. He declared that "No man is good enough to govern another man without that other man's consent. I say this is the leading principle, the sheet anchor of

American republicanism." Lincoln further added :—  
 "Those who can deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves and under a just God, cannot long retain it." So the refractory Southern states started the civil war by firing upon the union flag flying over Fort Sumter, South Carolina. Lincoln readily accepted the challenge. In doing so he had two principal war aims in view—(1) preservation of the union and (2) abolition of slavery, although the first was the immediate objective, for he believed once the union was saved, the second objective could be easily achieved. As a matter of fact they were in a way inseparable. In his inaugural address on March 4, 1861, Lincoln said : "The union of these states (United States) is perpetual. No state upon its own mere motion can lawfully get out of the Union." It was also his firm conviction that the union could not permanently endure half free and half slave. "A nation" he said, "which endures factions, domestic division, is exposed to disrespect abroad." It is one of the tragedies of Lincoln's life that, being intrinsically a man of peace, he had to resort to war, although it is true that he did not start the war but that it was forced upon him.

How strong and decisive Lincoln's views on the extinction of slavery were, are manifest from some of his observations that have since become classic aphorisms. His crusade against slavery and the anti-Union forces represented by the rebel Southern states, as embodied in his sayings, was neither conventional nor an outcome of political expediency. It came out of his innermost conviction and being a man of iron will and determina-



tion, no power on earth could ever make him swerve an inch from his resolve even if it meant a bloody war which he detested from the core of his heart. Lincoln, therefore, did not wait till the conclusion of the civil war to free the Negro slaves. On the September 22, 1862, as President of the United States, he made an Emancipation Proclamation in the course of which he declared that—"On and from January 1, 1863, all persons held as slaves in all states in rebellion against the Union shall be free." And his life's dream was fulfilled when two years later, in the Congress of January, 1865, slavery was forbidden for all time in every part of the United States by an amendment to the constitution.

In the following year (1864), Abraham Lincoln was elected the President of the United States of America for the second time. Next year (1865) in April a strange civil war in history ended in a strange manner. It was strange in the sense that never before in the world were two warring groups of whites ranged against each other on the battle-field to save from the thralldom of slavery millions of people of a different origin and colour in the same country. The war lasted for long four years and the republican army faced defeat in many places. But Lincoln never lost his faith in Lord God. It is said that he prayed very often to God and at dead of night, he prayed and read frequently the pages of the Bible. The run-away Negro slaves joined the republican army and fought against the Southern states. In his second Inaugural Address on March 4, 1865, Lincoln said :—  
 "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with

firmness in the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations". Ultimately the Republican army became victorious and the Southerners were subdued. It had a strange ending because after the surrender of General Lee of the Southern armies on April 9, both the Northern and Southern Generals vied with each other in magnanimity at Appomattox Court House. President Lincoln in a speech two days later, unfolded his reconstruction policy and offered the most generous terms ever given by a victor to a helpless opponent. The civil war ended, the union was saved, the slaves were freed, but a far greater catastrophe came when, within less than a week, Lincoln died the death of a martyr at the hands of a fanatic.

Ninety-five years ago, Washington D. C., witnessed one of the grimmest tragedies in the history of the American nation. On Good Friday, April 14, 1865, Abraham Lincoln was brutally murdered at Fords Theatre by a fanatic person—James Wilkie Booth. The President was instantly carried across the street to the house of one Mr. Peterson and there in a room laid diagonally on a bed since it was not long enough for a tall man like Lincoln ( he was 6 feet 3 inches in height ). A large anxious crowd had collected in front of the house. The surgeons' efforts proved ineffectual and next morning ( April 15 at 20 minutes past 7 ) ended the life

of a good and great man. Booth, who perpetrated this outrage had sympathies for the Southerners, who fought the Government and probably also upheld the system of slavery. Crazy as he was, he became more crazy after the victory of the Unionist ( Government ) armies in the civil war and thought he would be able to frustrate the latter's work and objectives if he succeeded in killing the President and all the principal officers of the Government. But subsequent events proved how totolly wrong his notions were.

Great men seldom have the good fortune to see during their life time the fulfilment of the work begun by them. They initiate reforms and indicate the lines ; it is for their admirers to implement them on those lines. Lincoln, though born of poor parents in a log cabin in Kentucky, had the good fortune of seeing his works fulfilled in his lifetime. Once he said—"I happen, temporally to occupy this big white house. I am a living witness that anyone of your children may look to come here as my father's child has".

We happen to know of great prose without any rhetoric at all. For instance, the few lines of Lincoln which he wrote to a lady and which the Oxford University honours itself by displaying it on the wall—"as a model of pure and exquisite diction which has never been excelled" :—

Dear Madam,

I have been shown in the files of the War Department a statement of the Adjutant General of Massachusetts that you are the mother of five sons



who have died gloriously on the field of battle. I feel how weak and fruitless any words of mine which would attempt to beguile you from the grief of a loss so overwhelming. But I cannot refrain from tendering to you the consolation that may be found in the thanks of the Republic they died to save. I pray that our Heavenly Father may assuage the anguish of your bereavement and leave you only the cherished memory of the loved and lost. And the solemn pride must be yours to have so costly a sacrifice upon the altar of freedom."

Yours very sincerely and respectfully,  
A. Lincoln.

We know also some great orations without rhetoric. Listen again to Lincoln whose following sentences the Marquiss Curzon of Kedleston, then Chancellor of Oxford University, declared to be "the purest gold of human eloquence, nay of eloquence almost divine":—

"Fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continues until all the wealth piled by the bondsmen two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toils shall be spent and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was paid three thousand years ago, so still it must be said—The judgment of the Lord is true and righteous altogether".

At the time when he uttered these words, Lincoln had little or no idea that he was unconsciously portraying his own character and summing up the high moral

principles that had motivated all his activities. His was a soul that flamed out of a frail and failing body. He was a crumbling lighthouse from which there shone the beams that led great fleets to harbour. His versatility has been not only immense, but monumental. His vigour and vitality have been overwhelming and volcanic and his interests and pursuits encyclopædic. Far from undoing the life work of Lincoln, a fantastic person like Booth was fatuous enough to believe, his dastardly crime has made the name of a martyr like Lincoln immortal in the world history and imparted to him a halo which will continue to shine in undiminished glory so long as justice, equality and freedom are adored by humanity.

Monuments, mausoleums and memorials may have a value of their own. But mere marble and granite cannot perpetuate the memory of great nation-builders. Lincoln is dead, but the spirit of this apostle of freedom and human rights is ever present and serve as a beacon-light to millions of lovers of liberty. Posterity will only be paying a lip homage to the hallowed memory of this brave and noble soul if it cannot follow the lofty moral principles he held so dear, overpower the forces of reaction and obscurantism and make an honest and steadfast endeavour to fulfil the great tasks left unfinished by him.

In 1852 Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe published her epoch-making book — "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The famous book took the world by storm and perhaps did more than anything else to secure the freedom of the

slaves in the United States. In this book Mrs. Stowe for the first time depicted the story of life on the cotton plantations, of heroism and cruelty, goodness and evil, escape and pursuit, based largely on facts. It is written with such passionate feeling that readers of to-day find it as absorbing as did the millions when it first appeared. This immortal book deeply moved Abraham Lincoln as it did the hearts of thousands of American readers who were completely ignorant of the great cruelty of slavery. It was Mrs. Stowe who clearly pointed out for the first time to millions of people, that slavery cannot last without cruelty, torture, lechery and trampling down the honour and shame of womanhood as well as humanity under feet. Mrs. Stowe is equally responsible with Lincoln and others for the abolition of this hateful trade. Man has tortured man in many ways from early dawn of civilization and still the worst type of oppression comes to human beings from man and not from others. But there are God-sent messengers who come to this world from time to time in rescue of thousands of oppressed souls. Blessed are such messengers who come to this earth in the guise of litterateurs, for they sacrifice themselves at the alter of human rights and privileges.

But in India no man ever uttered a single word in favour of the abolition of slavery, nor did anybody write anything against the validity of the institution. Even great social reformers and patriots like Raja Ram Mohon Roy, Raja Sir Radhakanta Deva and Prince Dwarka Nath Tagore did not say anything against the



great cruelty of slavery, though it was in vogue in India during their lifetime with all its cruelties and horror. And the condition of Indian slaves was not in any way better than their Negro counterparts at that time. Slavery was abolished due to the noble and sincere endeavours of the Western litterateurs and philanthropists.

The sixteenth President of the United States succeeded in freeing the Negro slaves. The thirtyfourth President, Dwight. D. Eisenhower, faces today another fact of the same problem, I mean the problem of colour bar or racial discrimination and of integration in U.S. schools. The recent happenings of Little Rock testify to this. The violent opposition Abraham Lincoln had to contend with is still in evidence in certain parts of America in some form or other.

## Chapter VIII

### Slavery in Modern Times.

In the land of European culture the movement against slavery, which began in the eighteenth century in an attack upon the slave trade, was largely the result of the rising spirit of democracy of recognition that the inherent evils of the system affected the slave holding element as well as the bondmen. The French Revolution was, I have already said, unquestionably the most important single factor making for abolition of slavery. Directly to it may be attributed the uprising in Saint Domingo, which resulted in the establishment of the black Republic of Haiti, which was responsible also, but somewhat more indirectly, for abolition in most of the Spanish American republics. In the Brazilian Empire, next to the United States, the largest occidental slaveholding country, the great dependance of the coffee planters upon slave labours was the chief cause for the prolongation of Institution, and the most potent single impulse towards abolition came from the civil war and emancipation of the United States of America. The law of 1838 decreeing the total elimination of slavery was the immediate cause of the downfall of empire in the following year. Slaves and serfs were freed in Russia by Tsar Alexander III in the nineteenth century.

The anti slavery movement turned its attention also to the various forms of slavery which had persisted in the Moslem countries, in the Orient and among the more primitive peoples. Although the predominance of a domestic and patriarchal type of slavery has made the system relatively mild in these areas. They have nevertheless proved particularly resistant to Western moral and religious codes. An outstanding target of the reforms has been the East African and Red Sea trade, which remained after the Atlantic trade was checked, and survives in a limited degree today. The leaders of the movement came to the conclusion that they could abolish the trade only by introducing Christianity and Western civilisation into Africa and by destroying the market through doing away with slavery itself. Such ideas provided an important pretext for the portion of Africa. In the abolition of slavery the British have been especially active ; remembering, however, the disorganisation caused by compulsory emancipation in the West Indies, they have been content with the legal status and in this respect have been followed by the other nations.

Action on an international scale against slavery dates from the early period of the attack on Atlantic slave trade. The Brussels Act of 1890, in which eighteen states participated, furnished the decisive move in the outlawry of such traffic. The convention of Saint-Germain of 1919, pledged its signatories to endeavour to secure complete suppression of slavery in all its forms, including forced labour, pseudo-adoption,



forced-concubinage and debt slavery, and of the slave trade by land and sea. In 1926 another convention prepared under the auspices of the League of Nations, bound the signatories to suppress the slave trade and to bring about complete abolition as soon as possible. The convention was ratified by 38 states. In 1938 it was assumed by the League of Nations' committee of experts on slavery that legal recognition only was in Central Asia and Tibet (although authoritative information was lacking), Arabia and Abyssinia; in the last named state the trade has been prohibited and freedom upon the death of the master and for children born after a certain date has been decreed.

Anti slavery propagandists estimate the number of slaves existing today as at least 5,000,000. In China the purchase and ownership of children, particularly of young girls for household services was common under the guise of adoption till the overthrowing of Kuo-Mintang Government, in the year 1948, by the communists. Marshal Chiang-Kai-Shek openly encouraged the system. Mao-tse—Tung, along with many social reforms, totally stamped out this evil feature of the country. In Abyssinia, perhaps one—fifth of the population consists of slaves, and there are also numerous serfs. The institution there is ancient, the life of Christian Church is bound up with it, and the large Moslem population likewise support it. In some cases slaves work in Agriculture, especially on the lands of powerful chiefs in the South-West, but in the main they are domestics. Upon these slaves, public officials, and

even common soldiers, rely for their economic support and common prestige. The supply is recruited by raids by Non-Abyssinian populations, even into neighbouring territories. Suppression is difficult because of the limited power of the emperor. In Arabia similar condition still prevails. Among the aborigines in Liberia domestic slavery, especially of women is widespread. Although the Government has banned slavery, it has countenanced the African custom of pledging persons, usually children, for the debt of a relative. The pledge is saleable. The Americo-Liberians have taken such powers. High officials have been accused of forcibly shipping natives to the plantations of Fernandopo and the practice is said to be scarcely distinguishable from the slave-trade. The Portuguese have been charged with similar action with respect to shipments from Angola to Sao Thome and Principe.

So inspite of many efforts, slavery still exists in many parts of the world, because of men's inherent wicked nature. In Nepal, it existed as an important social and political institution till the year 1930, where parents could and they used to, sell their children to rich land-owners and aristocrats as slaves. The husband could mortgage his wife to creditor, and in case he failed to pay back his dues, his wife was treated as the creditor's slave. She was usually confined to domestic servitude, and performed all sorts of domestic works. Poor parents sometimes mortgaged their grown up daughters to rich men in times of scarcity for a limited period, who were treated as the creditors' slaves, and

their offsprings were treated as the slaves of their masters. The male slaves were used as hard-working agricultural labourers. They also performed menial works in their masters' houses. The slaves generally received kind and generous treatment from their masters. Their condition could be compared with that of Indian servants. His late Highness Maharaja Sir Chandra Samsher Jungbahadur Rana, G. C. I. E., the Prime Minister of Nepal, abolished slavery from his country by a decree in the year 1925. All the slaves were released from their bondage according to that decree. Their masters were properly compensated.

In Arabia, especially in Saudi Arabia, the system still exists as a fully developed social and political institution. Far from doing anything to abolish the institution, the king of Saudi Arabia—Ibn Saudi enthusiastically encourages the system. The whole economic structure of the Arabian countries, viz. Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, etc are interlinked with slavery. The harems of the rich nobles, aristocrats and feudal lords, i.e., Amirs and Omrahoes, are filled with hundreds of eunuchs and slave girls, who are nothing but the concubines of their masters. The women have no right in the Arabian countries where they are used like chattels. Even the American oil merchants, for whose endeavours Saudi Arabia is very rapidly progressing both commercially and economically, have to enter into an agreement, before they come down to settle in Arabia, to the effect that their women must not walk in the streets without putting on Burkhas ; they



should never smoke nor should they drive motor vehicles. In a word, the mediaeval relics and systems still hang heavy on the Arabian countries. In some parts of Africa, slavery still exists under the guise of domestic servitude. And women are still used there as chattels.

In India slavery existed in the Native States even till the third decade of the twentieth century. But the trade was secretly dealt in. The rulers of Native States openly engaged slaves as their domestic servants. They gave many slave women as a part of dowries at the time of their daughters' marriage ceremonies. The harems of Muslim rulers were filled with slave girls. The poor boys and girls were forcibly taken from the custody of their parents to the royal palace and also to the palaces of rich nobles and Jaigirdars, where they were confined throughout their lives as slaves. The young girls were known as Bandis and they served as the personal attendants of the Begums and Ranis. The slaves were tortured and roughly dealt with for trifling mistakes. The Nawab of Junagadh fled away to Pakistan with his Begums, wealth, dogs and slave girls. He settled down in Karachi and his kingdom was inserted into Saurashtra area of Indian Union. But a few years back his chief Begum was arrested by Karachi Police on the charge of killing her 12-year old slave girl. She confessed that she chained her thirteen-year old slave girl and beat her excessively to death, because she went so far as to use her lavatory. And that is why she could not keep her head cool. She was sentenced to six

months' R. I. and a fine of six thousand rupees. This state of affairs lasted till the independence of India in the year 1947. And before that it was in vogue in almost all the Native States of India with more or less vehemence though there was no legal sanction behind the institution, and it was legally prohibited from British India. But the British Government did not like to interfere with the internal affairs of the native rulers. After the independence of India, the system has been almost completely abolished from the Native States. The new Constitution of India came into force on the 26th January, 1950, according to which India was declared as a sovereign republic within the British Commonwealth. It has been distinctly laid down in the Constitution of India that no man, woman or children can be sold out, leased, mortgaged or in any way dealt in. The dealers in human souls will be very severely punished according to Indian Laws. Moreover, no boy under the age of fourteen can be employed as a hired or forced labourer in any mines or factories. Slavery and forced labour have been completely banned by the Indian Government. But the purchase and sale of grown up girls was still in vogue in the former Hyderabad State. And it is surprising to note that even Lady Rama Rau complained a few years ago, while she was delivering a speech in a women's meeting, that poor parents still sold their grown-up girls to rich men and land-owners as slaves, who were confined to domestic servitude throughout their lives. Many rich men own large numbers of such slave girls who are used as the concubines of their masters. Year before last, Mr.

B. V. Keskar, lodged a complaint against the Nizam of Hyderabad to the District Magistrate of the city, to the effect that the Nizam had forcibly confined a large number of men and women in his palace who are nothing but slaves. He pleaded that since these poor creatures were forcibly kidnapped and confined in his palace against their will, the Nizam must be compelled to set them free. He furthermore stated that the Nizam was despatching his "living properties" underground ; so an immediate action ought to be taken to search the palace of the Nizam. His prayer was granted and the District Magistrate issued a search warrant. But the Nizam had recourse to his political rights to escape this search warrant. An interesting feature of the Constitution of India is that the President of India and the head of the states are not subject to the jurisdiction of any court in India. Even if they commit the most heinous crimes, no law is known by which they can be put under trial in any court in India. The Nizam pleaded that since he was the Rajpramukh of Hyderabad, such a search warrant could not be issued against him. The Hyderabad High Court accepted his contention and issued a rule in his favour cancelling the previous order of the District Magistrate. After the reorganisation of states, Hyderabad became merged with Andhra State and the Nizam ceased to be the head of the newly formed Andhra State. Mr. Keskar availed himself of the opportunity and filed again a suit against the Nizam for alleged abduction and kidnapping of young men and girls, and prayed for a fresh warrant to be issued against



the Nizam for searching his palace. The case is still pending in the High Court and we yet do not know the result thereof.

Thousands of Indian women were forcibly abducted and kidnapped in 1947-48 in Punjab and Kashmir areas by the barbarian Pakistani hostiles when Gulmarg, Punch and other parts were attacked by the so called Azad Kashmir men. They were backed and encouraged by Mr. M. A. Jinnah—the then Governor-General of Pakistan and Muslim League leader. Thousands of Hindus were most brutally slaughtered and their wives, sisters and daughters were taken away to Pakistani areas by the rioters. Some of them were presented to their leaders, some were distributed among themselves and many were sold out in the different parts of Pakistan, Iran, Arabian countries, Algeria, Libia and some other Muslim countries. The Punjabi, Sikh and Hindu girls and Kashmiri women are proverbially beautiful, so they were in great demand in the Muslim countries of Africa and the Middle East. They were sold there by the barbarian Muslim kidnappers for very high prices. These ill-fated women were confined in their purchasers' harems, and bound to accept concubinage. A Hindu prisoner who managed to escape from the hands of the rioters in 1948 vividly described the horrible condition of these Indian women. The most beautiful of them were allotted to the chiefs of the different hill tribes of North Western Frontier Provinces and Pak-occupied Kashmir and others were sold to their followers at a very cheap rate. The price of a woman varied from Rs. 10/- to 5/- only. From his descriptions,

we come to know that their condition is exactly like slaves. They have to do all sorts of hard, menial and domestic works in their purchasers' houses, who are invariably men of very low and filthy stocks without any education or culture at all. These Hindu women were converted to the Muslim faith as soon as they fell into their hands, and used entirely for their sexual enjoyment. They are nothing but the slaves of these barbarian raiders, who were men of meanest stocks and of lowest order and can be well-defined as beasts.

They were all Hindu or Sikh ladies of noble stocks. They were all happy in their own homes with their near and dear ones, before they were abducted and taken away to Pakistan. But they had to exchange their happy, peaceful and delightful days for the most horrible, tiresome and lamentful days in the dens of the rioters. They are now working like cattle in the houses of the Muslim gundas and hooligans, and are being forcibly enjoyed by the criminals of the meanest orders. Their honour has been trampled down by these criminals. Their condition is really very pathetic. And it is a matter of regret too deep for tears.

It is very disgraceful and a matter of great humiliation for the Government of India that it could not do anything to secure their release and get them back to India. Though our Prime Minister has entered into many a contract with the Government of Pakistan, yet no purpose has been served. According to Nehru Liaquat Pact signed in 1950, between the two Prime Ministers, an agreement was made to the effect that all the abducted

and stolen women were to be rescued and brought back to their mother lands. But the pact ended in total failure due to the deliberate non—co-operation of the Government of Pakistan. The Government of India remained silent and did not take any proper steps to compel the Government of Pakistan to secure their release and return them to India. Dr. Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, Barrister-at-Law, a great patriot and educationist, sharply criticised the weak policy of the India Government, and in protest of this policy, he resigned from the India Government of which he was then a Cabinet Minister. Dr. Mukherjee declared that India's independence was quite meaningless and ridiculous if thousands of such Hindu and Sikh women still remained slaves in the hands of the Muslim rioters. He again urged the Government of India to secure their release and bring them back to India and return them to their relatives. But he cried in vain. The great patriot disclosed the conspiracy of Seikh Abdullah to sell the independence of Kashmir to Pakistan. He was arrested, and he died in detention in Kashmir in June 1953.

India is a holy land and it has a many thousand years' old great civilization. It is also the birth place of many social reformers and preachers. The hearts of Indian people are filled with the milk of motherly affections. This holy land is the birth-place of Lord Buddha, Asoka, Mahavira, Sankara, Gouranga and Guru Nanak. All of them preached the noble teachings of Ahimsa, love and sacrifice. The Geeta—our sacred book—has decried the



evils, tortures and oppression on humanity and assures mankind with these sublime lines : —

“यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत ।

अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥

परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।

धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय सम्भवामि युगे युगे ॥”

Our poets and litterateurs have always believed in the greatness of humanity and worshipped the human rights. They have decried any torture and oppression on the human soul. That is why our poet Chandi Das sang many centuries ago : —

“शुनहे मानुष भाइ,

सबार उपरे मानुष सत्य ताहार उपरे नाइ ॥”

Yes, man is above all in this world. No oppression should hang heavy on his soul nor anything should reduce his position to any inferior calibre. The value of human life is immeasurable and man is the best creation of Lord God, because He has created man after his own image—this is the popular belief in our country. Our ancient sages have always taught us to love each other. And that is why the Hindu people never dealt in human flesh and blood as did other people of the world. Mr. Dange, the noted writer and political leader, in his work —“India from Primitive slavery to communism” lays special blame on ancient Indian society for her system of slavery. But he has not noticed that it existed with all its evil consequences in every ancient society in the world. And in ancient India, the institution existed in a very milder form

But the Indian people cannot be blamed for the horror and cruelty of slavery in the later period of Indian history i.e., in the Muslim and the British period, because at that time the institution was run by the foreign rulers and the natives of the soil like the depressed slave population, were nothing but the helpless and silent spectators. Slavery was not a problem with the Indians, so they did not care to do anything for it.

The whole world today eagerly looks forward to India for guidance, as it used to do in ancient times. Our country which is a firm believer in peace, Ahimsha and Panchashila principles, has a Prime Minister of charming personality, who is a man of profound knowledge, deep insight and has a hatred for any oppression upon the human mind.

The Prime Minister of India - Sri Jawharlal Nehru is also a staunch champion of human rights and a firm believer in the greatness of human soul, and he always keeps in his drawer a bronze cast of Lincoln's hand. He hates slavery, forced labour and all other oppressions on human body from the very core of his heart. He gave priority to the outlawry of slavery, forced labour, beggary, prostitution, polygamy and many other evils, when the constitution of India was being drafted. Later on, he did not hesitate to amend the Indian constitution for the betterment of human rights, and privileges. The constitution of India has granted maximum possible rights to its citizens. And it is universally admitted that India is governed by the best constitution of the world, because it has combined all the good features of the U.S.A

British, Swiss, Irish, Australian and Canadian constitutions. Today we are standing on the threshold of an atomic age. Every day new scientific inventions are providing the human being with comforts and happiness. But the air of the universe is filled with the poisons of radioactivity. The human civilization is now at stake, and it may burst out any day like soap bubbles. The modern scientific researches, far from giving any mental peace to mankind, are rather increasing our mental anxieties every day. This is due to the obvious fact that the western civilization is not prepared to compromise with other nations or give them any privileges. They want to exploit and trample down other nations under their feet as they did in the past.

Our people have an innate hankering after religion, and the deep belief in religion has restrained Indian people from dealing in human flesh and blood or committing such gross sins.

The days are not very far off when other nations will be marching with India along the path of righteousness—the path of the salvation of mankind—the path of rescuing the millions of oppressed classes of people and bind them in a tie of brotherhood. And ultimately to sing the chorus of the greatness of the human soul, will be our only end in view.

The End.



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